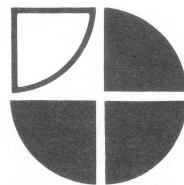


# MISSION FOCUS



## Mission—from a believers church perspective

JOHN DRIVER

### Defining "believers church"

Traditionally theologians have defined the nature and mission of the church by a series of "notes" or marks held to be essential to the church's existence and well-being. Roman Catholicism has defined itself as a "sacramental communion." Lutherans define the church as the community in which "the Word is preached in its purity" and where "the sacraments are properly administered." The Reformed tradition has added a third note: "the proper practice of discipline."

In contrast to these established church definitions, the believers church vision requires a considerably longer list of notes to describe the nature and mission of the church. Luther himself gave one of the clearest definitions of the believers church in the sixteenth century: 1. voluntary membership; 2. a covenanted community; 3. lifestyle characterized by ethical seriousness; 4. congregational discipline; 5. fraternal economic practices; 6. a congregational liturgy which is simple and functional; 7. authority of the scriptural word apprehended through the Holy Spirit (Lehman 1965:53ff).

Menno Simons included the following notes as essential to the church's being: 1. the Word proclaimed in an unadulterated form; 2. scriptural use of the sacraments; 3. the obedience of a holy life; 4. sincere love for one's neighbor; 5. unreserved testimony in the face of opposition; 6. suffering (Wenger 1956:739ff).

Taking his cue from explicit New Testament instructions

to believers, John H. Yoder offered these notes: 1. brotherly discipline; 2. love for the brethren; 3. teaching; 4. discipleship; 5. servanthood; 6. worship; 7. making disciples; 8. unity (Bender 1971:142ff).

Franklin Littell suggested that the essential characteristic of Anabaptism was its self-understanding as God's missionary community (1964:109-37).

In general terms the believers church can be defined by the notes included in these lists. Following is a missionary reading of the New Testament from a believers church perspective. This paper argues that the ecclesiological perspective from which one approaches the New Testament should shape missionary vision. Within the limits of this paper we suggest three elements:

- mission is fundamentally the proclamation of the messianic kingdom;
- missionary strategy grows out of the nature of this messianic kingdom;
- this mission leads to a universal configuration of God's people characterized by interrelationships which are fraternal.

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### Mission proclamation of the messianic kingdom

No biblical texts appear more frequently in the confessions of faith and the court testimonies of the Anabaptists than the Great Commission and Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein" (Littell 1964:109). These sixteenth century exponents of the believers church understood themselves to be God's new messianic people, bearers of history, and witnesses to God's kingdom.

The Old Testament is the record of a people on the way to salvation. Israel's identity was based on God's election and grounded in his covenant love rather than in their strength, or righteousness, or any other virtue (Deut 4:37ff; 7:6ff; 9:4ff)—elected to be God's instrument of salvation rather than merely its object (Gen 12:3; et al). The Old Testament is not so much the story of Israel as a people, as it is of Israel as the people of God. It was God's intention to create a people who lived all of life according to the divine will and which, at the same time, bore witness to his saving intention to all mankind.

The prophetic vision of the coming messianic kingdom portrays the universal dimensions of God's saving intention. The messianic Servant (as well as the messianic community) is given "as a light to the nations" in order that God's salvation may reach the end of the earth (Is 49:6). The gospel, according to Isaiah's vision (40:9; 42:9; 61:1,2), is above all the good news of the coming of the messianic era through the power of God. The New Testament picks up the theme of God's mission precisely at this point.

Mark points out that the preaching of John is "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (1:1) because he announces the One "who is coming" (Mt 3:7-12; Lk 3:16-18) and invites men to authentic repentance as a condition to participate in the radically new kingdom which is at hand. John employs figures of speech which accentuate the radical newness of the messianic kingdom: "from these stones to raise up children to Abraham"; "the axe is laid at the root of the trees"; and "fire."

According to the Gospels, Jesus began his messianic mission on the same note that John had sounded: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15). What John had announced as imminent, Jesus proclaimed as fact. In effect, the day of eschatological fulfillment has dawned. These words are startling. They carry profound implications for our understanding of the gospel as well as mission.

The messianic era has dawned as a consequence of what God has done. The decisive hour in the history of salvation has arrived. The hope of God's people, Israel, is realized.

The content of the gospel is not a new theology. It is not

a new understanding of God, nor is it a messianic doctrine. It is an event—the arrival of God's kingdom. (The perfect tense of the verb translated "is at hand" indicates that this reality is already present as a consequence of what God has done.) The Messiah has brought in the kingdom.

The references to "gospel" and "kingdom of God" here echo Isaiah 52:7. In other words, Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of the prophetic announcement "your God reigns" (52:7).

The announcement of the gospel of the kingdom calls for repentance and faith. The kingdom requires a radical reorientation in terms of attitudes, will, and values. In

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fact, a transforming mind renewal (Rom 12:2) is required which by God's grace makes it possible to participate in the blessings of the new era which has dawned.

In his synagogue appearance in Nazareth, Jesus identified himself with this messianic vision of Isaiah (Lk 4:17-21; Is 61:1,2). He was the herald of the new age in which God's jubilee intention for the life of his people is finally realized. Salvation comes to the poor, release comes to the captives, the blind see, the oppressed are freed; in short, it is as if God's jubilee has dawned (See Blosser 1978).

When John the Baptist was tempted to doubt the messianic identity of Jesus, Jesus' answer was, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Mt 11:4,5). This response, which echoes Isaiah 35:5,6 and 61:1,2, is clear. The kingdom of God has already appeared in the midst of humankind, although not in the manner that many—probably even John—had expected it to appear. Anticipating the end of time, the messianic era was already present in the person and ministry of Jesus.

"But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God **has come** (aorist) upon you" (Mt 12:28). Inasmuch as God is liberating men and women from the power of evil through the power of his spirit, the kingdom of God has already come. But this fact was not clear to everybody. The Pharisees, for example, failed to recognize the kingdom of God in their midst and therefore rejected the claims of Jesus.

The reality of the messianic kingdom was not only the object of Jesus' proclamation (Mt 4:23; 9:35; Mk 1:14,15; 8:1; 16:16). It was also the message with which the twelve (Mt 10:7; Lk 9:2,6), as well as the seventy were charged (Lk 10:9,11). And Jesus asserted "the gospel of the kingdom" will be the theme of missionary proclamation until the end of the era (Mt 24:14; 28:20).

In Acts Luke describes the message of Philip in Samaria as "the good news about the kingdom of God" (8:12). "The kingdom of God" was also the theme of Paul's proclamation in Ephesus (19:8), as well as in Rome (28:23,31). In fact, the prelude to the Great Commission in Luke (Acts 1:7,8) was a forty-day discussion on the implications of the kingdom of God (1:3). All these references indicate that the post-Pentecost preaching of the apostles was the same as Jesus had proclaimed from the beginning: that in the person and ministry of Jesus, God had acted to establish his kingdom. It has sometimes been claimed that while Jesus proclaimed the kingdom, the apostles simply preached Christ and, therefore, this is the task of the Christian church. This is a potentially dangerous half-truth because to proclaim salvation through Jesus the Messiah is also to preach salvation in the messianic kingdom in which he is Lord. The oldest of the church's confessions of faith was simply "Jesus is Lord." In fact, the Great Commission is prefaced by this fact: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mt 28:18).

In the biblical perspective the gospel of the kingdom is the fulfillment of the covenant promises of God. By virtue of the messianic mission of Jesus Christ, it is possible for mankind to taste "the powers of the age to come" (Heb 6:5) and to be freed from "the present evil age" (Gal 1:4). The gospel is therefore the good news of the decisive eschatological event which has already happened in the

incarnation. The Messiah already reigns and he will "reign until [God] has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor 15:25). The consummation of all things has not yet come. But the "not yet" of the eschatological future is anticipated in the "already" of the messianic kingdom which has come.

Understanding the gospel fundamentally in terms of God's messianic kingdom has some obvious implications for the church's understanding of mission (See Shenk 1976).

### *1. Salvation is kingdom living—here and now as well as hereafter*

The church is the messianic community characterized by the life of the new order (Eph 2). For this reason we resist the temptation to reduce the essential gospel to a minimum of doctrinal statements or formulas which are more manageable and marketable. According to the New Testament, the gospel is the good news of the kingdom. This includes repentance which reorients, submission and obedience to the King, and supernatural enablement through the Spirit of the King, that system of values and lifestyle characteristic of the kingdom described in the Sermon on the Mount. All of these are gospel! In fact one observes that the entire New Testament was somehow necessary to communicate a full-orbed meaning of the gospel in the world of the first century. It is precisely this full-orbed New Testament gospel which overcomes the false dichotomies which have clouded the church's understanding of salvation and mission: gospel vs. law; faith vs. works; Paul vs. Jesus; etc.

Those churches which have been most influenced by the Constantinian vision have generally tended to read Paul through the eyes of interpreters like Augustine and Anselm. In Roman Catholicism this has served to buttress a sacramental understanding of salvation. In traditional Protestantism—and modern evangelicals are by no means immune from this influence—it has contributed to an understanding of salvation in predominantly forensic terms. This is not to say that the insights of Augustine and Anselm were of no value in understanding the meaning of Christ's work in behalf of sinful persons. But useful as they are, they distort the rich full-orbed biblical meaning of the gospel and of salvation when they are assigned determinative importance. Rejecting the Constantinian synthesis, the believers church is freed to grasp a fuller biblical understanding of the meaning of salvation. In the believers church, militancy in the messianic kingdom and discipleship—as it was defined by Jesus—become prime categories for understanding the meaning of salvation.

In reality, salvation by faith in the Pauline sense **does not** mean the separation of salvation from a way of life determined by Jesus. Paul certainly did not intend to describe salvation as a metaphysical/spiritual experience which is independent of the way in which we live. This is precisely the point which James makes when he declares that there is no such thing as faith divorced from works. Faith without the Christ-like life cannot, in fact, exist. "Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means living in the peace of God. It is salvation itself" (Ramseyer 1979).

### *2. The gospel of the kingdom is a call to discipleship*

The fundamental element in the Matthean version of the Great Commission is to "make disciples" (28:19). To evangelize is to make disciples of Jesus. According to the New Testament, disciples comprise the messianic

community. The church's separation of salvation from discipleship under the theme of "faith first and then obedience" or "salvation first and then the fruits of salvation" is a dangerous distortion of the Great Commission. The call to salvation is identical with the call to discipleship. In the New Testament that call meant following Jesus in absolute obedience and personal abandonment. It implied changing occupations and sharing possessions. It included subordinating personal family interests to the demands of new loyalties. It brought with it a whole series of difficulties and social persecution. It meant being willing to risk one's own life and security.

The Great Commission laid upon Jesus' followers the task of making disciples in a way which bears little resemblance to much of modern evangelism. Jesus and the disciples simply could not imagine inviting people to salvation as if it could be experienced apart from discipleship. The call of the rich young ruler, narrated in every one of the synoptics, clearly shows the impossibility of enjoying eternal life independently of the most fundamental demands of discipleship. To become a disciple includes voluntary and absolute submission to Jesus Christ, symbolized in baptism and expressed concretely in adherence to the kind of lifestyle which Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount. We are not permitted to define discipleship according to our own convenience or our own moral possibilities. But within the community which is baptized with the Spirit of the living Christ, the discipleship which humanly speaking would be impossible is transformed into a joyful possibility.

Discipleship implies conformity to the concrete deportment of Jesus. Paul clearly had this in mind when he called on his readers to "be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). Paul's missionary message called for concrete conformity to the words and deeds and Spirit of Jesus the Messiah, especially to his suffering servanthood with all that this meant in terms of social relationships (See Driver 1978:10-11).

Only that community which knows in experience the meaning of discipleship will be capable of making authentic disciples. To show political awareness, to be socially concerned, to be evangelistic, to organize for extension, to experience church growth—these are relatively easy. But to form disciples of Jesus goes beyond all these and is possible only in a community which practices discipleship.

### 3. *The gospel of the kingdom is a gospel of peace*

God's word to humanity is "the good news of peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36; cf. Eph 2:17; 6:15; Rom 10:15). According to Paul, the fundamental work of Jesus Christ was the creation of a new community of peace (Eph 2). Peace, then, is integral to the gospel we proclaim. The good news is God's **shalom** in the midst of mankind.

**Shalom** was essential to the biblical understanding of the relationship between God and his people, as well as to social well-being. Peace resulted when people lived according to God's salvific intention. In the writings of the prophets, peace, justice, and salvation are synonymous terms for this condition of well-being which is both spiritual and social.

It is this understanding of peace which is taken up and further enriched in the New Testament understanding of salvation. The messianic peace inaugurated by Jesus and characterizing the Christian community finds its focal

point in the cross of Jesus Christ. According to the New Testament, hostility between human beings and God as well as among humans is overcome in Christ. The dimensions of this messianic peace are all-encompassing. "The gospel of peace thus integrally belongs to the Good News about Jesus Christ. The message of peace means that through no merit of our own we are in Christ reconciled to our enemies and called to participate in the social reality of a new community where old structures of personal, social, and economic hostility are replaced by those of reconciliation. In this sense the gospel of peace is a social gospel. It differs from other social gospels, however, which would attempt to establish peace and overcome conflict by domination and power rather than by inviting men and women to participation in the messianic community. The gospel of peace is also the proclamation of a present reality which has begun to take shape in the world characterized by strife, injustice, and power struggles—not simply a utopian vision of a desirable future. Finally, the gospel of peace is both a message and a corporate existence. The credibility of the message will therefore depend in large measure upon the community which proclaims it" (Miller 1977:5).

### **Missionary strategy grows out of the nature of the messianic kingdom**

Freed from the false dichotomy which separates salvation from the fruits of salvation and which posits an invisible church as the true church, a believers church reading of the New Testament perceives the strategy of mission deriving directly out of the structure of the life of the people of God.

#### 1. *The gospel lifestyle of the messianic community and mission*

The messianic community is missionary by its nature. The community described in the Sermon on the Mount, in the beatitudes in particular, is "the light of the world" (Mt 5:15) by virtue of the fact that it lives the gospel. One gains the same impression from Luke's description of the apostolic community "to which the Lord added . . . day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). Paul's missionary method was fundamentally that of concretely modeling the new life which had been revealed in the Messiah. His farewell charge to the Ephesian elders was an illustration: "You yourselves know how I lived among you all the time from the first day that I set foot in Asia" (Acts 20:18). He continued with references to his humility, suffering, persecution, verbal testimony (19-21), warnings (31), and fraternal economic practices (33-35) in contrast to the false leaders whom he described as "fierce wolves," probably a reference to their lifestyle (29). Paul's missionary message was not a matter of unincarnated doctrine; it was the proclamation and demonstration of a new way of life and a system of values whose source is the Messiah. It was this understanding of missionary witness by lifestyle which characterized the life of the churches reflected in the Epistles. In fact, even the worship of the messianic community is evangelistic (1 Cor 14:24,25).

#### 2. *Vicarious sacrificial suffering is integral to missionary witness*

This is the main thrust of the version of the Great Commission found in John, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (20:21). The concrete form of God's



mission in the person of his Messiah determines the missionary strategy of the messianic community. In fact this conviction is expressed throughout the New Testament. The suffering servanthood which characterized Jesus' understanding of his messianic role also determines the life and witness of the messianic community. This servanthood consciousness is found in the Epistles as well as the Gospels.

"For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45) is well known as a statement of Jesus' vicarious death. It is grounded in the vision of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:10-12, and it expresses the form in which Jesus himself understood his messianic mission. However, what is generally overlooked is that this text is not so much a doctrinal statement about the atonement as a description of the missionary lifestyle of members of the messianic community. This becomes clear when the context is taken into account. The lifestyle of the messianic community is not neutral. It is essentially missionary.

It was Paul (of all people!) who pointed up most clearly the missionary implications of suffering servanthood for the messianic community. When Paul's Damascus road experience convinced him that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed God's Messiah in the world, he understood that suffering servanthood is God's strategy for mission among the peoples of the earth. Therefore Paul's missionary stance came to be characterized by "weakness" (to use a Pauline term), suffering, and sacrifice.

Paul's voluntary renunciation of recourse to coercive power in the fulfillment of his mission was evident at a number of points in his life and thought. 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5 is a fundamental passage for grasping Paul's understanding of the "weakness" stance which authentic mission requires. "And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." The power of God is to be found in the cross of his Messiah (1:17). In contrast to the exercise of power and the intellectual arrogance of the Jews and Greeks of the first century, the suffering servant Messiah is the power and wisdom of God (1:24). Paul understood that in the incarnation God had, in reality, restored his value system which had been inverted by fallen man. This accounts for Paul's insistence on weakness, or vulnerability, as the fundamental stance of the messianic community. It is the Messiah who "emptied himself taking the form of a servant" (Phil 2:7) who serves as the model for his community. The church can fulfill its mission only by action which is consistent with the strategy of God's messianic mission in the world.

The other side of the weakness/vulnerability coin is the persecution and suffering that mission brings. Mission means suffering servanthood because the world's response to this apostolate takes the form of persecution. In fact Paul explicitly referred to his suffering as a continuation of the Messiah's suffering. "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake; and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's affliction for the sake of his body, that is the church" (Col 1:24). And when Paul wrote of "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus" (2 Cor 4:10-12), the grammatical construction of this passage made it clear that Paul was not identifying with the death of Christ understood in some mystical sense, but rather

with "the killing of Jesus." The forms which the historic suffering and killing of Jesus took also apply to Paul's understanding of his apostolic mission as a continuation of suffering servanthood (cf. 2 Cor 1:5).

A believers church reading of Paul's writings leaves one with the inescapable impression that apostolic mission in the world of the first century necessarily implied suffering and persecution. Apparently there was (and is) no other way to authentically communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ (See Driver 1978:7-9).

### **Mission leads to a universal configuration of God's people characterized by interrelationships which are fraternal**

Freed from the various Constantinian forms which have historically characterized Roman Catholicism and Magisterial Protestantism, as well as from the spiritualistic ecclesiology which much of modern Evangelicalism has inherited, a believers church reading of the New Testament discovers another alternative to the problem of interchurch relationships which has plagued the modern missionary enterprise.

#### *1. The essential unity of the church*

The unity of the Body of Christ is essential to its nature. To be otherwise would be a denial of its origin in the Triune God who is One (Eph 4:1-6). The New Testament does not reflect a series of national congregations in which differences of clan and race are perpetuated. The church is by definition the community in which the barriers which divide humanity are overcome. Nationalism, racism, and prejudice based on difference of sex and differences in status for economic, cultural, religious, or social reasons which contribute to attitudes of superiority in some and feelings of inferiority in others are no longer determinative in the "new humanity" created by Jesus Christ (Eph 2:11-12; Gal 3:28). In this context the "new man" (15) is not a renewed or reborn individual, important as that is, but the messianic community in which former enemies are reconciled to each other and with God. This is concretely the meaning of salvation and the objective of mission.

#### *2. The problem of denominationalism*

The modern missionary enterprise has generally served to perpetuate denominationalism as well as nationalism. This practice of "assuming names" was roundly repudiated by Paul in his missionary methodology, not merely for strategic reasons, but due to convictions relative to the nature of the Body of Christ. Denominationalism was, in effect, happening in Corinth where groups of Christians were forming under various names (1 Cor 1:10-12; 3:3,4). Paul, for his part, could have simply ignored the other factions, or he could have vigorously promoted his own "denomination." But he refused both alternatives as contradictory to the true nature of the church. Instead he insisted that the richness of diversity which contributes to the "fullness of Christ" must be constructed upon the only foundation there is, Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11).

There were obviously differences among Peter, Paul, and Apollos in terms of Jewish law, Greek wisdom, styles of preaching, and matters of personality. Paul did not merely seek to smooth over these differences or give people the impression that they were free to choose one or another according to their personal preferences. On the



contrary, he wrote of a foundation on which all subsequent missionaries are called to build (1 Cor 3:5-15). This oneness of the church is essential to its being and, according to Paul, the ultimate survival of a missionary's work depends on his respecting the foundation already laid (3:11) and building upon it in a way which is consistent with the nature of that foundation (3:11-14).

### 3. Relationships which are fraternal

Paul's conviction that the church of Jesus Christ is essentially one led him to collect funds among the Hellenistic churches for the brotherhood in Jerusalem in spite of pressures to the contrary. The Hellenists probably advocated allowing the Jewish branch to wither away. On the other hand, the Judaizers would have forced all Christians everywhere into a Jewish mold. But Paul went out of his way to maintain fraternal relationships with both Greek and Jewish elements of the church. This was so important to him that he did it at considerable personal risk. It was Paul's conviction that the essence of the gospel lies in the destruction of the barrier between Jews and Gentiles through the creation of a new humanity in which the old causes of separation are overcome.

The true unity of the church is realized in relationships which are fraternal, through acts of mutual aid, fraternal admonition and brotherly discipline, genuine edification, and even laying "down our lives for the brethren" (1 Jn 3:16).

### 4. The goal of mission: formation of covenanted communities

All the Gospels report that Jesus began his mission by gathering around himself a messianic community of committed followers (Mt 4:18ff; Mk 1:16ff; Lk 5:9ff; Jn 1:37ff.). [Luke presented something of an exception in that he first identified Jesus as the Suffering Servant (4:18,19) who made persons whole (4:31-44).]

Both Acts and Paul's epistles bear witness to the fact that invariably the Pauline mission, too, led to the formation of a local messianic community. Each of these local communities was fully the church. It is not the sum of individual congregations, in Paul's thought, that produce the total Christian community or church. Each community, however small, represents the total community. Even a small fellowship such as a house church can be called a church (Rom 16:5). And it can be listed together with larger congregations (1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15,16). In fact, Paul could write of the "church of God," referring to a single congregation (1 Cor 1:2), as well as the "churches of God" (1 Cor 11:16). It apparently did not occur to Paul to make a qualitative distinction between the total church and the individual congregation. However, this did not mean that the local congregation had the right to be the church all by itself.

### 5. Churches and missionary practice

On the other hand, the Constantinian vision of the church has been quite uncritically—albeit sometimes unconsciously—accepted in missionary thought and practice. Structurally, Catholic missions plant the "Roman" church around the world. Among Protestants we find anomalies such as the Church of England in India. And while the inconsistency may not be as apparent because the denomination involved is not national in character, the same problem can be found among modern Evangelicals of the free church tradition.

Conciliar Protestantism has generally promoted church unity along national or regional lines; for example, The Church of South India. But this approach to church unity simply perpetuates the Constantinian vision in a form similar to that which it has taken in Protestantism since the sixteenth century. Comity arrangements among missionary societies are, in reality, based on a territorial understanding of the church's unity. Terms applied to the church, such as "national," "independent," "indigenous," "self-governing," "self-supporting," and "self-propagating" are all understandable as reactions to political and ecclesiastical colonialism. However, these terms all presuppose the uncritical continuation of a Constantinian perspective. Missionary imperialism as well as movements of ecclesiastical independence are expressions of a territorialism which is more Constantinian than biblical.

On the other hand, free church Evangelicals all too often view the unity of the church as "spiritual" or "mystical" (that is, invisible). But meanwhile they continue their denominational missionary enterprise quite independently of their brothers and sisters, perpetuating, and even adding to, the fragmentation of the Body of Christ.

The New Testament envisions a messianic community gathering together men and women from "every nation, from all tribes and people and tongues" (Rev 7:9), mutually enriched as members of God's "new humanity" in which the old barriers which separate are overcome. This unity is expressed concretely in a configuration of interdependent relationships which is universal in its scope.

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## In response

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**TAKASHI YAMADA:**

**Studies need to be challenged by world reality**

1. Driver's paper is well done and impressively biblical. Theologically it is well thought through. On several points it is both inspiring and provoking.

2. His article reaffirms what we have in our minds as our Anabaptist vision and heritage in the context of the history of the Western Mennonites.

3. Evaluation of such an article depends much on the context in which we read it. For many third-world Mennonite leaders, the more they read such materials, the stronger they feel that they don't know what to do with them.

4. It has been my experience during the past 20 or more years that Western Mennonite leaders have given many fine papers and speeches on Anabaptism as well as the issues related to it. And every time we, the third-world Mennonites, read and hear them we wonder how they can really be relevant in the context we face in our practical work of mission.

5. Maybe we need to approach Anabaptism in a reverse way by checking and reflecting if it is really a great heritage to carry on for both ethnic and non-ethnic Mennonites and, if so, in what sense it is so. This must be done in the light of our experiences and actual situation.

6. What Driver's article seems to be lacking is this objective, overall, and practical point of view which emerges from real struggles and perplexities experienced in our actual carrying out of the mission of the Christian church. Biblical and theological studies need to be fed back and challenged by the reality of the world today.

7. One such aspect is the matter of the "religionizing" and the "de-religionizing" function of church. Catholicism, with its heavy sacramental and institutional elements, had a strong religionizing function, standing in the lineage of "priesthood." The Anabaptists, with their strong biblicism and subjective element, exercised a powerful de-religionizing function as an antithesis and a counterculture over against the "corpus Christianum" of that time, standing in the lineage of the prophets in the Old Testament. The Reformers' church also had a de-religionizing function, but they never went far, retaining a good deal of religionizing function, putting comparatively

heavy emphasis on clergy, sacraments, and church as means of grace.

8. In Europe in the sixteenth century and later periods, Anabaptism developed counterparts for which it could exercise the de-religionizing function. Sometimes a Mennonite community itself becomes a corpus Christianum, and then the Anabaptist vision needs to play its prophetic role within that Mennonite community.

9. In the third world today, however, where there is nothing like corpus Christianum, there is a need for religionizing in the true Christian sense. Where and how can we find Anabaptist vision demonstrating its dynamic power in positive formation of "corpus Christi"?

10. Probably a question like this is beyond the limit of the article. And it is just one of the challenges which someone from the third-world Mennonite circle should take up. If the believers church tradition in today's world can affirm the basic expression of Anabaptism as "servanthood stance in confronting attitude," and try to live with it, it can be a medium or a window through which the world may take a glimpse of the dynamic power of the kingdom of God working in humanity's world, although it may remain as a creative, significant, and unique minority.

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## GEORGE R. BRUNK II:

### Need motivation for witness here and now

The lead article on mission by John Driver has both strengths and weaknesses. Some of the weaknesses and fallacies of popular evangelistic techniques and methods are identified. The sons of Menno should all be in agreement regarding the meaning of total commitment to Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord. Admittedly there is too much of cheap grace where seekers who raise a hand or sign a card are assured of salvation that can never be lost.

Here also we have an attempt to clarify the meaning of the messianic kingdom introduced and inaugurated by Jesus.

Popular evangelism perhaps deserves Driver's criticism because it has failed to stress the meaning of discipleship and peace or nonresistance. The modern missionary enterprise is also criticized for the perpetuation of denominationalism and nationalism. Evangelical free churches are faulted for seeing the unity of the church as only spiritual or mystical while they continue to fragment the body of Christ.

Driver finds much that is wrong with modern missionary methods and popular evangelistic techniques. It is not at all uncommon to hear some Mennonite academics offer sharp criticism of Billy Graham. With all our criticisms, we may well ask ourselves a few sobering questions. How well have we succeeded in reaching the world of unsaved people with the gospel? If our understanding of the

present messianic kingdom is correct, should we not be able to demonstrate more effectively just how men and women are to be brought into it? In light of the staggering proportions of the evangelistic task in a world of four billion plus population in which two-thirds do not even profess to be Christians and where two million are born every day, are we justified in multiplying words on how the job is to be done and in criticizing others who are deeply immersed in the task while we make such a pitifully poor showing? What if the total task were left to us? Is it safe to assume that we are without crippling blind spots?

Until we are more successful in demonstrating to the rest of the Christian community how this mission is to be fulfilled, should we not be modest and reserved in our judgments of others? With all the shortcomings of those we criticize, perhaps they will tell us they like their stumbling way of getting the job done better than they like our stumbling way of not getting it done!

Many Christians of other communions have gone far past us in showing a Christ-like compassion for the lost. Many congregations are far more intense in their efforts to reach the unsaved than are most of ours.

This article seems too academic, sophisticated, and critical. We stand in desperate need of literature that will motivate our people to be witnesses for Jesus here and now! We need leaders with hearts that are broken who can show the members of the flocks how to witness and what it means to be crucified followers of a crucified Savior and Leader, Jesus, who wept over a lost city of people and gave himself to that cross on which his blood was shed in the great atonement for the sins of the whole world. Too much of our literature on mission and evangelism seems to lack clear theological and doctrinal understanding of the vicarious work of Christ on the cross. There appears to be a strange hesitation to make reference to the blood atonement and the crucifixion. We are showing the effects of an "incarnational" theology which goes silent on the meaning and significance of the death of Christ on the cross. This article seems to show this weakness.

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## JOHN S. POBEE:

### Mission must critique society, point to consummation

If one survives the rather dry first page and a half, one gets into a very refreshing biblical statement of the missionary vision from an ecclesiological perspective. However, one spots some omissions and takes issue on the emphases Driver gives or does not give.

1. Driver is right that mission is witness. What he does not emphasize, which to my mind is the crucial point, is that the witness is in response to a vision which almost compels the respondent to wish and act to share that vision with others. Jeremiah 20:9 KJV is what I have in mind: "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." The witness itself is a response to that vision which is datum,



non-negotiable and demands commitment. But when that necessity is laid upon the respondent, God also fills him with the Spirit so that he bubbles over in mission. Thus it can even be said that the vision or revelation and the Holy Spirit precede the missionary or the church.

2. Mission involves judgment. That note is not emphasized in this paper. By judgment I mean God's ruling on matters of faith and practice, in history and at the end of history. Mission critiques contemporary society (the standards being the datum mentioned above) and points people to the consummation of history. In other words, though mission is rooted here on earth, it also must say, "Here is no continuing city," with all the ethical implications of that statement. This, as I see it, is part of the kingship of God which, as Driver rightly points out, is the content of the mission.

3. The statement on peace I find rather superficial. It is harmony of soul and community with others. That was the central teaching of the prophets. But the ministry of Jesus, like our mission, brings division (Mt 10:34, Lk 12:51; Mt 10:12-15; Lk 10:5-9; but we still have the commission to bring peace (Mt 5:9; Mk 9:50). This tension should be brought out. Surely this is the issue at stake when we face the question of the church's involvement in politics.

4. Driver's note on vicarious sacrificial suffering as being integral to the missionary witness overlooks the important point of the uniqueness of Christ's suffering. Is our suffering to be seen in the same way as that of Christ?

5. There is the other issue of the relation between the biblical faith and culture. The biblical stuff is itself culture bound. That ecclesiological perspective is also culture bound. But in mission the culture of the respondent is added to the Semitic and first-century cultures. All these have now to confront the culture of the mission field.

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## STEPHEN C. KNAPP:

### Need cultural analysis and critique

Increasingly my own agenda has been shifting from development of a theological vision to analysis of the cultural context(s) into which theological visions must somehow be translated. Without questioning Driver's emphasis on the critical task of developing a theological vision, perhaps I can contribute most to the dialogue by bringing my special interest in cultural analysis. On the level of content of the vision, there is virtually nothing in Driver's presentation with which I disagree. The content of this vision, however, (as with the Mennonite perspective generally) implies need for supplemental cultural analysis and critique.

1. Even after we have agreed that "mission is fundamentally the proclamation of the messianic kingdom" and the creation of a "new humanity," decisive questions remain as to what these concepts mean in contemporary and concrete terms. The success of Christian missionary activity means that contemporary

mission more often than not takes place in contexts which are "eschatologically charged." Largely as a result of the impact of Christian eschatology on the West and the subsequent pervasiveness of Western impact around the world, individual and corporate quests for one or another version of the "new humanity" (and in varying degrees of agreement with the biblical concept) pervade contemporary societies. The critical challenge for Christian mission, then, is to discern the points of convergence and divergence between these prevalent expectations—many of them distorted versions of biblical eschatology—and the biblical vision. The ongoing debate about the relation of mission to capitalism and socialism is a prominent place where this process of discernment is going on. Both capitalism and Marxism articulate expectations regarding a new humanity. Both draw in one way or another on the biblical heritage. Within traditional societies, messianic movements and cargo cults articulate eschatological expectations as well. On a less abstract level, one can discern latent eschatologies in the rural exodus of third-world young people seeking a better life (the American dream?) in urban centers. Frequently Christians (including missionaries!) are caught in situations where choices must be made or, at the very least, where biblical notions of the new humanity must be brought into critical dialogue with competing ones in the processes of evangelization, discipleship, and nurture. All too often, precisely because Christians are insufficiently aware of the prevalence of eschatologies competing with one another and the biblical vision, the eschatologies present in the context are allowed to determine the meaning of theological terms like "the new humanity." Articulation of a theology of mission which places central emphasis on the kingdom surfaces the need for a more thoroughgoing, critical analysis of the eschatologies already present, "before" the presence of the Christian or Christian message.

2. As with Mennonite perspective generally, Driver's paper makes a significant contribution to the task of discerning eschatological expectations prevalent in the culture. The central emphasis on servanthood, for example, offers a profound challenge to the quest for power and success that lies at the core of the American, Western, and capitalist quest for the "new man." At this point, at least, "nativistic" and socialistic eschatologies (or their mixture, in the case of Tanzanian socialism) offer a more biblical alternative. Whether or not the American dream lies hidden at an individual, psychological level within socialist ideologies needs to be investigated. But certainly, to the extent that the church truly models the new humanity along the lines which Driver's vision suggests, it will be radically "countercultural" in the contemporary US context which elevates so highly achievement, competition, and independence at the expense of sacrifice for others and community. At the same time, it is a tremendous challenge to those American-based theologies and strategies of mission which unconsciously foster the American dream.

3. To the extent that the biblical vision of the kingdom highlights weakness and servanthood and divine power over human power, perhaps the most profound implication of Driver's theology of mission for mission strategy is one which he fails to mention. It is a disturbing fact that much of Christian mission has taken place in very close proximity to the forceful, coercive expansion of technologically superior civilizations. The latest example of this



"collusion" of mission and civilization has been the close tie between the missionary outreach of the Western churches on the one hand and imperialistic "modernization" of traditional societies on the other. So successful has been this "joint program" that a similar collusion is now widespread between national churches and third-world nation-states in a program to absorb and "educate" rural cultures and communities. In the case of both external and internal colonialism, Constantinian theologies are utilized by the church to legitimate the use of secular power (violence?) for Christian purposes and the integration of civilizing and Christianizing. Even where there is not an explicit theological justification for this collusion, the same result is assured by theologies which build a sharp distinction between the political and the spiritual, the religious and the secular. The Mennonite vision, in theory at least, challenges the civilizing model of mission in the very act of challenging the Constantinian model of the church. That is to say that the believers church perspective, when fully worked out and consistently implemented, challenges at various levels much of what goes on today under the label of "mission."

4. I am especially appreciative of Driver's criticism of the widespread tendency to separate evangelism from discipleship or the gospel from lifestyle ("Salvation is kingdom living—here and now as well as hereafter"). Recently I have been thinking that several dichotomies prevalent in the church—private and public, evangelism and ethics, theology and practice—are closely related and have similar roots and functions. They should be regarded not only as theological heresies, but as coping strategies of Christians in the modern world. There is much sociological work, for example, on the matter of "privatization"—the tendency of religious commitment to become a private affair in pluralistic secular society. Reducing the gospel to the private, personal realm is in part a way of reducing the difficulty of holding onto an absolutist ethical and religious stance in a relativistic, pluralistic environment—an environment, in fact, which makes the intrusion of any particular religious orientation into the public, political realm **illegal**. Similarly, highlighting the forensic as over against the ethical dimensions of salvation unconsciously enables Christians to adapt to the world in many relatively invisible ways (values, behavior, lifestyle) while maintaining identity as an "orthodox" Christian at the same time (having one's discipleship cake and eating it too). The highlighting of theological orthodoxy as a test of faith, prevalent among Evangelicals and Fundamentalists, has similar sociological meaning, I believe. Maintaining orthodoxy of belief is a relatively easy, manageable matter in the midst of social change, while maintaining orthodoxy of confession frequently masks deeper level tolerance of accommodation to culture on the level of values and behavior. (An interesting example of this phenomenon is the increasing prevalence—and tolerance(!)—of divorce among Evangelicals. Richard Quebedeaux's *The Worldly Evangelicals* is in many respects an account of the drift of behavior away from what was formerly regarded as biblical, in the midst of relative stability and orthodoxy on the level of confession.

The Anabaptist vision, its insistence on the equal importance of confession and lifestyle, and its stress on the church as a model of the new humanity is especially relevant today because of the way that it calls the cultural accommodation of the church—including the missionary enterprise—into question. I have a hunch that we are only

at the beginning of working out the full implications of this, especially when it comes to Christian mission.

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**ROELF S. KUITSE:**

### **A lot of homework ahead for our churches**

Driver takes as the starting point for mission the kingdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Mission is proclamation that this kingdom has come in Christ. This kingdom involves a new community, a new nation, living together as disciples of Christ, living the "shalom" in the midst of mankind. This new, messianic community is a message to the world. In describing the missionary strategy—"God's strategy for mission"—growing out of the nature of the kingdom, Driver mentions "the gospel lifestyle" and "vicarious suffering" but fails to mention intercession and prophetic witness.

The new life for the world and the hostility of the world become visible in the church as the body of Christ. The one leads to the other. Driver does not speak about the tension between what the church has to be and what it is in reality, a tension we read about in Paul's epistles, a tension we know in our own experience. This tension is expressed in the indicative "You are . . ." and the imperative "Be what you are . . ." The awareness of this tension preserves the church from spiritual pride on the one side and from despair on the other. A living church knows what sin is and what disobedience is.

In the believers church (theologically speaking, a strange term; something like "wet water"), disobedience takes the form of paying so much attention to the being and well-being of the community that the world is forgotten; the church becomes an introvert, a religious enclave. Driver mentions another example of disobedience in his final section where he treats denominationalism, fragmentation of the body of Christ, and missionary imperialism. The unity of the body of Christ is essential to its nature. And that is why mission has to lead to an universal configuration of God's people characterized by interrelationships which are fraternal. If that is true—and I think it is—then we have a lot of homework to do in our churches. We tend to believe in history and the traditions formed by history more than in the living truth revealed in Jesus Christ. Too often the starting point of our thinking is **our** church instead of God's kingdom—the kingdom of God expressing itself in a new way of thinking and living together, of speaking and acting, of concern and commitment, of openness and discernment.

These few lines have been written to express my appreciation and gratitude for Driver's article in which he deals clearly with the missionary nature of the church. One small, final question. What is "God's system of values?"

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## HUGO ZORILLA:

### Need stronger statement of the missionary task

This response takes into account two perspectives, one global and one specific.

1. Global perspective. There is no doubt that the subject John Driver raises in this article does not lose its relevance for the business of the kingdom of God. The focus of the subject, in general terms, does not deviate from the traditional lines of classic theology.

The attempt to define believers church is made from a classic theological base, and an alternative interpretation derived from New Testament exegesis is not offered. Also, Driver does not openly question the absence of the concept of mission in traditional definitions of the church.

It would have been profitable to have a clear definition of mission as the church's reason to exist, as opposed to mission as a structure rooted in the enterprise mentality of rich countries. Likewise the term "missionary" merits reevaluation, since if we seek new life in the community of believers, we must have a sense of proclamation or denunciation also.

In general Driver's work is edifying. I regret that only in the last three paragraphs of the article does he more pointedly criticize "missionaryism." The form reminds me of the traditional sermon outline in which three interwoven points are developed, supported by texts without much exegetical development, and at the end comes the conclusion with its "application" or final blow.

2. Specific perspective. Driver makes a notable effort to define the believers church, though he employs much-used categories of classical theology.

In his initial definition of church he does not point to the absence of the concept of mission in traditional definitions. This lack reflects how Protestantism has justified the proliferation of mission boards and paraecclesiastical entities created with the pretext of helping the church. The truth is that in fact, the community of faith has often been on the margin of what these boards want to do in its name.

Driver correctly establishes that mission is fundamentally the proclamation of the messianic kingdom. It seems to me that mission is a task of the believers church which cannot be put off. As the subject is stated, however, this is not said strongly enough, including the absence of denunciation of missionaryism with its dichotomy between the church and the mission. That is to say, missionaryism justifies the missionary structure on the one hand, and mission as the spiritual ministry of the congregation.

There is no doubt that the gospel of the kingdom is a call to discipleship and a gospel of peace, as Driver explains. We need more clarity that the believers church favors justice and the oppressed; Driver later writes that "the lifestyle of the messianic community is not neutral." If it is not neutral, on which side are the members of the messianic community? The answer seems to be on the side of the missionary task. Again we ask, who is benefitted by this task? In the end the oppressed do not if "vicarious sacrificial suffering" does not go with the task.

The third point of the essay touches upon the painful matter of the church and denominationalism. Here the implications of theological differences are evident. These aspects should be considered more deeply. How can missionary work be done without creating branch congregations of the mother agency? How can we escape

the temptation to consider ourselves possessors of the true doctrine? The first-century church is still a model in this, as Driver emphasizes in his last point.

Finally, the conclusion of the article is weak. This ending impairs the total impact of this serious analysis of the believers church.

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## VIRGIL A. OLSEN:

### Stress conflict between messianic and satanic kingdoms

The paper on mission by John Driver is an excellent statement from a believers church perspective. I kept saying "Amen" again and again as I read the tightly reasoned and well expressed thesis on "mission is . . ."

I would like to make two points, one an addition to the "mission strategy/nature of the messianic kingdom," and the other a problem related to the "universal configuration of God's people/interrelationships which are fraternal."

In terms of strategy I like the emphasis on lifestyle and on suffering servanthood. Both ideas need to be restudied and relived.

Picking up the theme of the kingdom and relating it to strategy, I feel there is a need to stress the conflict between the messianic kingdom and the satanic kingdom. The danger is to avoid the confrontation. Mission strategy is often tempted to become in-house, introverted, doing the Christian thing in the Christian way in the Christian citadel.

Jesus sent out the disciples to go from town to town and house to house to proclaim, "The kingdom of God has come near you." When the disciples returned to Jesus, they said that "the demons were subject to us in your name." Jesus perceptively announced, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." This is mission in raw, hand-to-hand, spiritual conflict.

My impression of the final section of Driver's paper is that he fails to present a realistic "alternative to the problem of inter-church relationships." The ideas expressed by Driver have been stated not only by the believers church advocates but even by such ecclesiastical deviants as Constantinians, Magisterial Protestants, and "spiritualistic" Evangelicals.

The problem of denominationalism is not easily eroded. Even the so-called believers church, when explicitly defined by an in-group person, tends to become a hue in the denominational rainbow spectrum, even in mission identity. The leap from the now to the "new humanity" in Revelation 7 is an existential tension with which mission continues to struggle, many times blundering into divisions, yet by the grace of God, even when in disorderly array, claiming to be the "household of God."

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# Mennonite mission bibliography (a review)

PETER HAMM and ADOLF ENS

This essay calls attention to books and articles on Mennonite mission which missionaries on the field, missionaries in training, and mission executives and professors might find useful. Accessibility to Mennonite libraries is assumed.

The essay is written within the following limits. First, it is consciously attempting to draw attention to Mennonite literature on missions, representing mainly three denominations: Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite, and Mennonite Brethren. Second, it is more representative than exhaustive. The brevity of the entire essay restricted the authors to selective choices within the defined areas. Third, it deals with overseas missions (excluding the cross-cultural, home-based mission pursuits). Fourth, it is restricted to the collective holdings of the two Canadian colleges to which the authors had access. Finally, the essay includes published works only, not theses and dissertations which would likewise have valuable contributions.

We trust that this beginning will provide incentive to an ongoing report of research in progress, as well as to a more comprehensive survey of Mennonite mission bibliography. It is our conviction that even the several denominations represented can learn much from one another, not to mention the mutual enrichment resulting from the broader exposure to free church and other Christian traditions.

## The theology of mission

In keeping with the main theme of this issue of *Mission Focus*, it may be helpful to examine the theology of mission in the mission literature produced by Mennonites in order to see how fully it reflects a believers church perspective.

Although Mennonite involvement in transcultural and overseas mission activity in modern times received most of its stimulus from the larger mission movement within Protestantism, some of the literature consciously investigates the sixteenth-century Anabaptists. These, in contrast to the other continental reformers, had a strong missionary consciousness and activity.

The most extensive study in this area is Wolfgang Schaeufele's, *Das missionarische Bewusstsein und Wirken der Täufer* (1966). It considers carefully the relationship of the *Gemeinde* to the missionary task, although it also deals at length with the eschatological tension which formed so large a strand of the missionary motivation for a number of the Anabaptist groups. In analyzing the practical side of Anabaptist mission, Schaeufele gives particular attention to the role of ordinary church members in the spread of the faith. This aspect is also featured in his article, "The Mission-

ary Vision and Activity of the Anabaptist Laity" (1962).

The other scholar who has given considerable attention to this aspect of Anabaptism is Franklin H. Littell. His *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism* (1964) devotes one of its five chapters to "The Great Commission." Even more strongly than Schaeufele, Littell emphasizes that in the Anabaptist view Jesus' missionary command applied to all Christians at all times. Again, the core of this material was presented a few years earlier in an *MQR* article, "The Anabaptist Theology of Mission" (1947).

North American Mennonites, however, have not necessarily connected believers church with mission or vice versa. Thus J. C. Wenger's *Introduction to Theology* (1954) does not discuss mission under "The Nature and Function of the Church," but rather as a short separate subsection on "The Great Commission" (*ibid.*:242-45). But the *Aspen Consultation on Anabaptist-Mennonite Theology* (A. J. Klassen 1970) devotes one of its five papers to "The Covenant Community and Mission." The General Conference Study Conference on the Believers' Church (see P. K. Regier 1955) still thought of church and mission as distinct and included a separate paper on "Our Concept of the Church on the Mission Field." A more recent study, *The Church in Mission* (1967), edited by A. J. Klassen, includes a chapter on "The Biblical Concept of the Church" (*ibid.*:33-49) in its section on the foundation of mission. It also begins its section on the historical recovery of mission with a chapter on "The Anabaptist Involvement in Missions" (*ibid.*:85-100).

But it was Pietism, rather than the Anabaptist missionary heritage, which became the immediate stimulus in awakening a sense of missionary obligation in the Mennonite churches in modern times. That was the conclusion of Rev. C. Nijdam in describing the European Mennonite mission activity at the 1936 World Conference (Christian Neff 1936). Edmund George Kaufman found the same to be true for the North American groups in his study of *The Development of the Missionary and Philanthropic Interest among the Mennonites of North America* (1931), although he was also preoccupied with the then current sociological concept of the sect cycle. A. J. Klassen's *The Church in Mission* similarly includes a chapter on "The Missionary Emphasis of Pietism" (1967:115-33).

From their beginnings Mennonite missions have to a greater or lesser degree attempted to integrate a whole range of service ministries with their oral proclamation of the gospel. The roots for this were seen in Anabaptism, as J. D. Graber described it in his chapter, "Anabaptism

Expressed in Missions and Social Service," in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Hershberger 1957:152-66). The fruits of it are reflected in the *Official Report of the First Asia Mennonite Conference* (Malagar 1972). Graber also devoted a chapter to it in his discussion of modern missions, *The Church Apostolic* (1960), given as the 1959 Conrad Grebel Lectures. Klassen, perhaps reflecting his denomination's mission history, placed the chapter on "Ministries of Compassion" in the section on "Newer Dimensions of Mission" (1967:222-395).

The integration of these two aspects of mission was not always satisfactorily achieved. A Consultation on Relief, Service, and Missions Relationships Overseas (See Paul N. Kraybill 1964b) was held in Chicago to discuss some of the tensions existing between the various North American Mennonite mission boards and Mennonite Central Committee. While the consultation identified some of the areas of tension, it did not do more than begin to articulate a theology of mission-service. C. Norman Kraus dealt with this issue in a more concentrated way in his booklet, *The Healing Christ: Social Services and the Evangelical Mission* (1972).

Not much has been written that explicitly relates the peace witness to mission. Carl Beck's chapter in *A Kingdom of Priests* (Wilbert R. Shenk 1967:94-109) is one sample. Chester Wenger gave it a paragraph in *Called to be Sent* (Kraybill 1964a:72). *MQR* carried an article on "The Peace Witness in the Christian Mission" (1963), by R. Pierce Beaver. There are some indications that the scarcity of literature reflects actual practice in Mennonite missions.

In sixteenth-century Anabaptism, mission and suffering were closely related (Ethelbert Stauffer 1945). Theron F. Schlabach in *A New Rhythm for Mennonites: The Mennonite Church and the Missionary Movement, 1860-1890* (1975), emphasizes the importance of the *Martyrs Mirror* in shaping Mennonite mind-set in the eighteenth century. The theme of suffering is the focus of a chapter in both Shenk's *A Kingdom of Priests* (1967:124-39), and Kraybill's *Called to be Sent* (1964a:123-30).

A number of the recent treatments emphasize the centrality of the church in the missionary task. Graber's *The Church Apostolic* (1960) devotes the opening two chapters to this theme. Kraybill devoted the opening chapter of both parts one and three of his book to aspects of the church as it relates to mission. In George W. Peters' *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (1972), the church does not figure prominently until chapter six, and even then a good part of the chapter is devoted to an apology for creating special missionary sending agencies not fully representative of the church.

John H. Yoder, *As You Go* (1961), moves in the other direction with the church actually engaging in migration evangelism.

A Mission Forum pamphlet series was begun by Herald Press in 1971 with the publication of David A. Shank's *His Spirit First*. Shank found that the much needed new approach to mission may come not from new structures, but rather through an openness to the Holy Spirit like that of the church in Acts. Kraus's booklet on *The Healing Christ* is also part of this series.

It would appear, therefore, that whereas an Anabaptist theology of mission is in fact implicit generally in Mennonite mission practice, Anabaptist peace emphasis is still lacking to a considerable extent.

### The practice or strategy of mission

A Mennonite mission bibliography significantly incorporates the practice or strategy of mission. Limits of space allow only a brief reference to several articles or books in each of the following categories of mission strategy, yet additional published works will be mentioned.

**Evangelism and church planting.** Surprisingly little has been written on the strategy of evangelism and church planting. Addressing himself generally to the subject, former general secretary of Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services, J. B. Toews, firmly rooted meaningful evangelism in the local church. In his article, "The Church in Evangelism" (1965), he cautions the church against escaping its evangelistic responsibility through the guise of city-wide and community campaigns, and also in becoming primarily absorbed in its nurture task. He argues that dynamic evangelism is reflected in church growth, "the basic evidence of a normal character and function of the church as a spiritual organism" (*ibid*:37). More specifically concerned with evangelism in a dechristianized society, David A. Shank from the European setting carefully distinguished the "dechristianized" (once Christian) from unchristianized, in "A Missionary Approach to a Dechristianized Society" (1954). While his analysis of the "contemporary situation" was portrayed a quarter century ago, his insights are valid today, as is his understanding of the message to contain a "given" which does not change (*ibid*:51). In its method within such a society, the church must note that the society does not recognize "professional" missionaries, and therefore must witness through a "lay apostolate" in a live spiritual center (library, study, chapel, or lecture room) with a corporate worship dominated by the Word, Spirit-led and spontaneous (*ibid*:54). European missionaries in particular will profit from a careful reading of this thoughtful essay. Concerned more with the unchristianized world, George W. Peters has specifically outlined eight elements necessary for a strategy of evangelism, followed by nine guidelines for implementing the strategy (1975). He witnesses an unprecedented

awakening of evangelism in evangelical circles today (1975:76). Earlier, in his book, *Saturation Evangelism* (1970), he analyzed various evangelistic methods around the world, especially assessing the "Evangelism-in-Depth" campaigns in Latin American and "New Life for All" campaigns in Nigeria, and drew up six principles for effective evangelism (1970:127-43). The area of inter-religious dialogue has scarcely been touched (Klassen 1967:222-50). New frontiers are, however, being explored (Kraybill 1964a: 95-104).

**Church growth.** Perhaps no one has popularized the notion of church growth as has Donald McGavran. In his *Gemeindegrowth als missionarisches Ziel* (1976), Hans Kasdorf has carefully articulated the principles of the church growth movement and, proceeding to his own understanding of church growth, pleads for a balance between proclamation and presence. Whereas Kasdorf's own view of biblical conversion cannot be faulted for its radical demands of change, he fails to demand the same radical change, accompanied by a true knowledge of God, awareness of self, and consciousness of sin, in McGavran's notion of discipling and the fruits of conversion. For a more critical review of church growth studies, where the McGavran school is placed alongside the much longer tradition in "World Studies of Churches in Mission," one needs to examine Wilbert R. Shenk's *The Challenge of Church Growth: A Symposium* (1973). Shenk analyzes McGavran as theorist, propagandist, and polemicist, "a projection of the American ego and style, a mood and manner which is strongly pragmatic" (*ibid*:21). He sets the stage well for John H. Yoder's penetrating critique of McGavranism. Yoder isolates the spurious issues, including the "scientific" red herrings (*ibid*:27-30), and provides a theological analysis of McGavran's "discipling" and "perfecting" notions (*ibid*:31-47). Yoder prefers a strategy which avoids a split between gospel and nurture, which does not advocate class separation, and which does not become cultic (developing a school around one man's insights). In the same symposium, three other chapters warrant study. Allen H. Howe correlates the "church growth" issue with the "evangelical/ecumenical" polarity from a specifically Anabaptist understanding of the church (*ibid*:49-64). Robert L. Ramseyer concerns himself with "Anthropological Perspectives on Church Growth Theory" (*ibid*:65-78); J. Stanley Friesen, with his Nigeria and Ghana experience, shows "The Significance of Indigenous Movements for the Study of Church Growth" (*ibid*:79-106). Few Mennonite missionaries have documented case studies of church growth as have S. V. Sawatsky of Taiwan, A. Buckwalter of the Toba Indians in Argentina (MBM 1975), D. J. Arthur of India (1970; see also Hamm 1970a,b) and Wilbert R. Shenk about

Muria churches of Indonesia (1973).

**Communicating cross-culturally.** The matter of communicating cross-culturally has largely been left to the linguists and anthropologists among whom several have written prolifically, Jacob A. Loewen alone having contributed some 30 articles to *Practical Anthropology* before it metamorphosed into *Missiology*. Concerning languages and language learning, Jacob A. Loewen has helped understand "Why Minority Languages Persist or Die" (1968) and, on the basis of his experience as a monolingual immigrant to Canada and later missionary to Colombia, suggests in "Language: Vernacular, Trade or National?" (1965a) how the use of the vernacular in the early stages of evangelism can be followed by the use of the trade or national language for an illiterate people, since both languages have an important place. In "Approaching Language Learning," Harold W. Fehderau provides helpful tips to the missionary beginner (1960). Among the most insightful of Loewen's articles are his analyses of the "Innermost" among the Lengua Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco (1966, 1965b) and the Choco of Panama (1964). The *sine qua non* for missionaries who work with a preliterate worldview, his "Mythology and Missions" demonstrates how myth can be an aid to missions (1969). For a more comprehensive study of human life in all its diversity, Paul G. Hiebert's *Cultural Anthropology* (1976) serves as a good introduction.

**Integrating word and deed.** It appears that long before the theory or theology of integrating word and deed was articulated by Mennonite theologians and missiologists, the practice was integral to mission itself. Interestingly, after 50 years of mission work in India, the Mennonite Church, the General Conference Mennonites, and Mennonite Brethren separately published their jubilee achievements within a year or two. These fine mementos of mission work demonstrate practically what may never have been consciously theologized. In 1948, A. E. Janzen, representing the Mennonite Brethren, surveyed the achievements in terms of church planting, educational work, medical services, and publication in the anniversary booklet entitled, *Foreign Missions: India, 1898-1948*. The American Mennonite Mission at Dhamtari published *The Love of Christ Hath Constrained Us* (1949), a well-illustrated, readable account of the various mission endeavors to help the needy, to teach, to heal, to preach, and to build the church. It was in response to a famine that the work was begun, and the first mission efforts included famine relief, medical work, and an orphanage. Similarly, Mrs. Harold Ratzlaff's well-illustrated booklet, *Fellowship in the Gospel, India: 1900-1950* (1950), provides evidence of a variety of work: evangelism, education, medical services, a leprosarium, and church build-



ing in the General Conference area of work. The theological rationale has subsequently been provided by J. D. Graber in "By Word and Deed" (1960:45-67), by Hans Kasdorf in "Proclamation and Social Concern in Missions" (1969), and by C. Norman Kraus in *The Healing Christ* (1972).

**Missions-church relations.** Again, formal analysis of these structural relationships came long after significant progress was made in the transition from mission dependence to church autonomy to brotherly interdependence. As one reads *Being God's Missionary Community* (MBM 1975), one senses the growth in such understanding of partnership in mission. Among the 15 essays written as a tribute to J. D. Graber are John Driver's "Being God's Missionary Community" (*ibid*:17-22), in which he confesses that we have learned in our pilgrimages that voluntary commitment to a life of radical mobility is certainly a possibility for adults, but for children it is no simple matter" (*ibid*: 18); and Albert Buckwalter's "Brothers, not Lords" (*ibid*:39-45), in which he recognizes that it is one thing to deal with problems emerging from oneself or the supporting community, but more difficult to deal with problems emerging from the Indian community (*ibid*:44). The book concludes with Graber's "Partners in World Mission" (*ibid*:113-28), in which he exhorts that "our mission is to transmit mission" and that in our partnership strategy, "We work behind the scenes teaching, visiting, inspiring, and planning *with*, not *for*, the church" (*ibid*:123). A helpful essay which conveys considerable insight into the actual working out of "bearing burdens together" is Donald R. Jacobs' "Partnership in Mission" (Paul N. Kraybill 1964a:115-22). The most analytical and thoroughgoing study of mission-church relations by a Mennonite scholar is George W. Peters' presentation to the Green Lake '71 Conference of EFMA-IFMA organizations (Vergil Gerber 1971). At this conference Peters defended a position of mutuality and partnership rather than dichotomy of church and mission (see Peters 1968). Another new dimension in mission-church strategy is the recent work of Mennonite churches among the African Independent Churches. Here one should note the implications for mission structures, as does Wilbert R. Shenk in "Mission Agency and African Independent Churches" (1974), and the experience which Edwin and Irene Weaver have narrated in *The Uyo Story* (1970) and *From Kuku Hill* (1975).

**Missions and social change.** The mutual impact of mission and society as a whole has seldom been the focus among Mennonite scholars. Elmer S. Miller has effectively—though shockingly—portrayed the missionary as an "agent of secularization" (1973). Robert L. Ramseyer has shown how the missionary can make a unique contribution, not in the secularization process as much as in the humanization of technological society: "As one who

can never be part of the natural community himself, the Christian missionary is in a position to understand the identity problems of those who have lost their reference groups in the transition to technical society" (1973:323). In his essay, "Cultural Relativism and Theological Absolutes" (1973), Paul G. Hiebert calls attention to the limitations of epistemological model building and finds the Anabaptist emphasis on the priesthood of believers "eminently modern in its approach and capable of providing us with a framework with which to face the modern world of thought" (1973:2-6). In "Missions and Anthropology: A Love/Hate Relationship" (1978), Hiebert welcomes the paradigm shift in epistemology, for it brings us "closer to the biblical perspective of the limits of human knowledge and of the importance of faith" (*ibid*:178). This is tantalizing news for Christian social scientists and missiologists who wrestle with social change.

**The missionary—preparation and life.** Finally, we draw attention to this highly practical dimension of mission strategy. George W. Peters has written numerous articles and a pamphlet on the "call of God" and the qualities and preparation of the missionary (see 1960:1-30, 1963, 1965, 1971). It should be interesting to compare how the missionary of the 1980s is to be prepared in comparison to this missionary in the 1970s. On the subject of missionary identity and servanthood, Joseph C. Shenk's article in *Missiology* continues to provide counsel (1973). Concerning his continuing role, George W. Peters pleads, "Let the Missionary Be a Missionary" (1965a). Jacob A. Loewen argues that "self-exposure" is the bridge to fellowship (1965c), and with his wife, Anne, he identifies the "missionary" role and the significance of self-image in missionary communication (1967a,b). For the missionary's conduct in situations of conflict, the Council of International Ministries statement has become a model for several mission organizations (Wilbert R. Shenk 1975). And for the everyday life of the missionary, both in its monotony and its humor, few will excel Omar Eby's *Sense and Incense* (1965). The increasing number of recent biographies, as well, will enable the reader to understand the newer strategies for the Christian church in a day of rising nationalism. It is to this area of publication of biographies and history that we now turn.

### Mission history, area studies, biography

Perhaps it is the commitment to Christian stewardship with the accompanying sense of accountability that has prompted Mennonite mission agencies to encourage history writing, routine reporting on the progress of work, and the preservation of anecdotal accounts of individual missionaries. Certainly Mennonite scholars have been more prolific in this area than in the

more theoretical fields of mission theology and strategy. Given the limits of space, one can do little more than classify an annotated listing of the writings. Such organization of the literature will then also indicate which areas have least adequately been covered.

**General denominational histories of mission.** To date only one work has attempted to embody the early missionary development of all North American Mennonite groups. This history, *The Development of the Missionary and Philanthropic Interest among the Mennonites of North America*, by Edmund George Kaufman, published in 1931, concentrates upon the General Conference endeavors (*ibid*: 57:181), covers the Mennonite Church in a secondary manner (*ibid*:183-240), and only in a very tertiary way includes Mennonite Brethren (*ibid*:241-55) and other smaller bodies (*ibid*:256-85). Two appendices provide additional case studies of the General Conference Mennonite Mission in China (*ibid*:323-78) and the Old Mennonite Mission in India (*ibid*:379-91). Unfortunately, such a comprehensive history including all the Mennonite bodies has not been updated nor newly written.

Instead, the task has been assumed by denominational documentation. Theron F. Schlabach, in *A New Rhythm for Mennonites* (1975), presents the background out of which the Mennonite Church began its missions, 1860-1890. In a subsequent essay, "The Humble Become 'Aggressive Workers': Mennonites Organize for Mission, 1880-1910" (1978), Schlabach shows how the Mennonite Church has created new institutional structures to achieve its mission ideal. Impressive, indeed, are the annual reports published by Mennonite Board of Missions. This mass of information on overseas missions, home missions, mass communications, relief and service, student services, and health and welfare is supplemented by a brief analysis of the state of mission focused on a particular theme. This annual assessment is an excellent source of historical data.

One of the earliest portrayals of the General Conference beginnings in mission is found in the published address by Gustav Harder, *A Review of the Mission Activities of the General Conference*, dated 1915. Subsequently, about 1927, Sister Hillegonda van der Smitten traced the awakening of mission interest among the Mennonites of North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the pamphlet, *The History of Our Missionary Societies*. In 1961 S. F. Pannabecker surveyed the current worldwide involvement in missions in *The Christian Mission of the General Conference Mennonite Church*, more a handbook than a comprehensive history. Not to be overlooked is Waldemar Janzen's "Foreign Mission Interest of the Mennonites in Russia before World War I" published in 1968.

The development of missionary dynamic among Mennonite Brethren, both in Russia

and North America, has been documented by J. J. Toews in "The Missionary Spirit of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia" (Klassen 1967:134-54), and by A. E. Janzen in "The Development of Missionary Dynamic among American Mennonite Brethren" (*ibid*:155-77). The earliest comprehensive history of Mennonite Brethren missions is *The Growth of Foreign Missions in the Mennonite Brethren Church* by George W. Peters in 1947. Peters includes an analysis of the specific factors which contributed towards awakening of missions interest both in Russia (*ibid*:43-50) and North America (*ibid*:73-130). Parallel to Pannabecker's survey for the General Conference, A. E. Janzen prepared a *Survey of Five of the Mission Fields of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America* (1950). Containing reports and pictures of the institutional work, statistics, finances, and personnel, it serves as a handbook of information for 1950. Written in a more readable and popular style, Mrs. H. T. Esau's history, *First Sixty Years of Mennonite Brethren Missions* (1954), commemorates the sixtieth anniversary of Mennonite Brethren missions. The book includes many personal experiences of missionaries in their daily work. Mrs. Mary Nikkel prepared a study of Mennonite Brethren missions in 33 lessons entitled *Conquest for Christ*. Published in 1961, this volume contains many valuable and interesting accounts of missionary activity, and it readily achieved its objectives to inform and inspire. More recently, in *The Mustard Tree: The Story of Mennonite Brethren Missions* (1971), Mrs. Phyllis Martens has updated the missions record in a realistic account which recaptures both the growth and change that has occurred since 1899. Again, the book serves as a study guide. Under publication is an updated history of the Mennonite Brethren board and its policy, authored by George W. Peters. With the many fragmentary accounts of Mennonite missions, it would appear that if one massive history covering all the Mennonite mission work is not in place, surely a single, updated, and comprehensive account for each of the denominations is long overdue.

**Area Studies.** Regional involvement and in-depth experience of missionaries or researchers at particular times and places tends to produce case studies which provide the documentation for testing mission strategy and/or writing histories. India, where North American Mennonites have worked longest, flourishes with such reports, pamphlets, and even books. In 1939, M. C. Lehman of the Mennonite Church authored a mission study course consisting of 12 lessons. While not a history, the booklet is both informative and inspirational with its descriptive accounts of the work. The fiftieth-anniversary publication of Mennonite work in India, *The Love of Christ Hath Constrained Us* (1949), was mentioned above. Most thor-

oughgoing is John A. Lapp's *The Mennonite Church in India, 1897-1962* (1972), reviewed by Donald McGavran in *Missionology* (1973). For the General Conference, its first missionary to India, P. A. Penner, in 1915 published a well-illustrated pamphlet about the work among lepers, *Kurzer Bericht ueber die Arbeit unter Aussaetzigen*. The dependent state of the indigenous church with the missionary as pastor in Champa is depicted in Anna G. Stauffer's account in 1928, *Mennonite Mission Study Course: India Mission Field*. In 1929, a twenty-fifth-anniversary work was written by the India missionaries. Entitled *Twenty-five Years with God in India* (Mennonite Book Concern), the survey of the various aspects of the work concludes with a chronicle of the 25 years and an interpretive summary. Mrs. Harold Ratzlaff's fiftieth-anniversary book, *Fellowship in the Gospel, India: 1900-1950*, mentioned above, appears to be the last major General Conference published account of work in India. Mennonite Brethren work in India has generated numerous pamphlets and booklets: around 1914 missionary N. N. Hiebert published an illustrated pamphlet entitled *Missions-Album aus der Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde*; in 1929 missionary J. H. Voth published *Ein Jahr unter den Telugus*, and about 1934 *Fuenfundzwanzig Jahre am "Berg der Goetter"*; Deverakonda, Decan, Sued-Indien; in 1933 missionary D. F. Berghold edited *Licht und Schatten: Achtzehn Berichte von Arbeitern*; in 1936 board chairman H. W. Lohrenz published *Unsere Mission in Indien: Berichte von Arbeitern*, and in 1939 *Our Work among the Telugus*; mid-century, general secretary A. E. Janzen edited the fiftieth-anniversary booklet of mission work, *Foreign Missions India, 1898-1948* (1948a), mentioned above, and another fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the church, *The Andhra Mennonite Brethren Church in India, 1904-1954* (1955); in 1956 missionary J. H. Lohrenz surveyed the history in the booklet, *What God Hath Wrought!*; missionary Peter M. Hamm published a comprehensive statistical report with concluding interpretation of assessment, *India Mennonite Brethren Church Statistical Report, 1940*; and in 1968 national leader D. J. Arthur edited a fiftieth-anniversary memento of the annual convention, *A New Vision for the Church Today*. A more all-inclusive account of MB work in India, comparable to Lapp's history, is currently being completed by George W. Peters and constitutes part of a trilogy edited by Paul G. Hiebert of which the two volumes on Latin America by J. J. Toews (1978) and Zaire by J. B. Toews (1975) are already in print.

The inter-Mennonite mission work in China, begun by the H. C. Bartels in 1901 and continued some 45 years before it was taken over by the Mennonite Brethren, is briefly narrated by H. C. Bartel (in 1913) and A. E. Janzen (in 1949). These pamphlets are largely testimonials of

missionaries, but contain helpful factual information. In 1922 F. J. Wiens published *Pionierarbeit unter den Hakkas in Sued-China* in which he provides a detailed account of his own experiences as a missionary and the work of the mission, H. J. Brown tells of *The General Conference China Mennonite Mission* begun in 1909. Written in 1940 and almost half devoted to the geographic socioeconomic, and religious setting, this brief history does survey the first three decades of mission activities in evangelism, education, and medical work. Dorothy S. McCammon's *We Tried to Stay*, written in 1953, is the narrative of five brave American Mennonites who had chosen to stay after the "liberation" of West China, but who were suddenly ousted. J. D. Graber said of this work: "Story of failure on the human level may well represent victory on a higher level" (*ibid*:xi).

The dearth of literature from post-World War II Mennonite work in Japan in no way reflects the lack of productive missionary activity. The General Conference Mennonites published a well-illustrated, brief memento after one decade of work (Willard Wiebe 1961), and Mennonite Brethren Harold E. Gaede and Ruth Wiens (1955) published a brief history and account of the current work after eight years in Japan. The recent story of Earl S. Martin's attempt to identify with the Vietnamese (1978) represents the servanthood stance so frequently demonstrated by MCC volunteers.

Likewise, Africa has been the scene of activity with a very limited historiography. In 1947, A. E. Janzen edited *Foreign Missions: Africa*, a factual summary of mission work, mission stations, and missionaries. In 1978 J. B. Toews' history of *The Mennonite Brethren Church in Zaire* was published. The work of the Congo Inland Mission, now Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, is narrated in *Twenty-five Years in the Congo* (William B. Weaver and Harry E. Bertsche), published by CIM in 1938; *Thirty-five Years in the Congo* (William B. Weaver 1945); and more recently in Melvin Loewen's *Three Score—the Story of an Emerging Church in Central Africa* (1970). Two further studies supplement the understanding of the Mennonite presence in Africa. These are David W. Shenk's "A Study of Mennonite Presence and Church Development in Somalia from 1950 through 1970" (1973), and G. Ronald Anchak's "The Decision to Go to Tanganyika" (1978).

Documenting the history of Mennonite missions in Latin America has scarcely begun. In 1943, Sanford Calvin Yoder retold the story of the small band of missionaries sent to Argentina in 1917 and of the later entry into the Chaco of Paraguay. His booklet, *Down South America Way*, was supplemented by J. W. Shenk's *The Gospel Under the Southern Cross*, also 1943; William D. Reyburn's anthropological interpretation in *Toba Indians of the Argentina Chaco* (1954); and



by Christian L. Graber's account of the Moro attacks in Paraguay in *The Coming of the Moros: From Spears to Pruning Hooks* (1963). Mennonite Brethren produced several smaller pamphlets on the beginnings of the work in Brazil, Colombia, and Paraguay (see A. E. Janzen 1948b, 1948c, 1952). Encompassing these main areas of Mennonite Brethren work and the joint efforts with other associations in Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay is J. J. Toews' published doctoral dissertation, *The Mennonite Brethren Mission in Latin America* (1975). Mennonite mission historiography for Latin America would certainly be incomplete without recognizing the Silver Jubilee publication of the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Canada. Written by Sue Barkman, this volume places the work of the EMC in Mexico, Paraguay, and Nicaragua from 1953 to 1978 in the historical setting of the EMC in Canada and Europe where it also extended its work. It is a fine tribute to the growing mission concern of this smaller Mennonite denomination.

**Missionary biography.** The intense missionary involvement of Mennonite churches during their brief mission history has scarcely begun to reflect the selfless service, the human endurance, and the unfolding of God's work through personal histories which missionary biography is capable of communicating. The few works that have been published should inspire writers, whether they are missionaries or not, to relate more of this exciting story. One such gem, with no publisher nor date indicated, is the 86-page autobiography of Lena E. Penner, missionary to Armenia at the turn of the century. Entitled *Soll ich meines Bruders Hueter Sein*, this booklet depicts the philanthropic work of Lena E. Penner and sisters Lambert, Gerber, and others, among the massacred Christians of Armenia. Virtually nothing of this heroism is recorded in history. Again China and India have yielded the most personal histories of the early mission work. Aganetha Fast, representing the General Conference Mennonite work in China, has two volumes of stories of missionary life, *Out of My Attic* (1970) and *The Power of Christ's Love in China* (1972), which reflect her missionary experiences in China from 1918 to 1949. The experiences of Mennonite Brethren missionary Paulina Foote in China is told in *God's Hand over My Nineteen Years in China* (Foote 1962), and by Katie Funk Wiebe in *Have Cart—Will Travel* (1974). Author Margaret Epp has beautifully retold the story of the H. C. Bartels (with whom both she and her parents were active in mission work), in *This Mountain is Mine* (1969). The saga of internment of China Mennonite missionaries, first under Japanese occupation during World War II, and later by the Chinese Communists, is retold by H. J. Brown in *In Japanese Hands* (1943) and by Dorothy S. McCammon in *We Tried to Stay* (1953). From India come the story, *With Christ on*

*the Edge of the Jungle* (1941), by S. T. Moyer, of the triumphant struggle to make disciples among the outcastes; the story of Mrs. J. H. Lohrenz, *A Life for Christ in India* (1963), written by her husband; and the adventurous saga of J. J. Dick, *From Exile in Russia to Mission Work in India* (1940). James E. Bertsche, in *Congo Wayside Glimpses* (1952), popularly depicts missionary life in the Congo just after World War II. And A. E. Janzen has provided a factual record of the "voluntary sacrifice" of Kornelius Isaak to the fierce Moros of the Chaco in *The Moro's Spear* (1962).

To date, most of the writing on mission history and area studies is factual presentation. More interpretive histories and diachronic field studies need to be written. Although a beginning has been struck in the narration of spiritual pilgrimages and in unfolding God's work through the lives of servant witnesses, this fascinating and highly inspirational form of personalized history needs to be told. And it warrants narration, not to enhance personal achievements but to acknowledge the acts of God through those who respond obediently.

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## In review

*Christian Mission and Social Justice.* By Samuel Escobar and John Driver. Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1978, 112 pp., \$3.95 (pb)

### Reviewed by Vernon Ratzlaff

Written by people deeply rooted in Latin America, *Christian Mission* analyzes the relation of theology to economic and social structures. Escobar, born in Peru, presently living in Argentina, and preparing to return to Peru, has been executive director of IVCF (Canada) and is now director of IFES (Latin America). He writes three of the four chapters of the book. Driver has been involved with church extension in Puerto Rico and Uruguay from 1947-1974; presently he is in Spain.

Escobar points out that mission strategy has often interfered with existing customs—Paul against slavery (Acts 16) in Philippi, or John Williams against cruel punishment in Tahiti—and that this interference has emphasized the need to speak for justice.

He criticizes those current mission strategies that emphasize going to the poor, because success is more obvious; for such, "poverty is taken as a datum only in order to define a strategy that has nothing to do with either the import of the Christian message or the fact of poverty or social change directed to the elimination of poverty" (p. 47). Missionary action will result in people recognizing "their condition as oppressors and the change of their social practices" (p. 54).

He chronicles the unhappy alliance between missionary activity and oil company exploration (p. 62) and develops a global vision for mission representing an Anabaptist perspective, "a consistent refusal to accept wholeheartedly any existing system" (p. 75).

Driver concludes the book with an essay pointing out that the majority of Latin American Mennonites do not share Escobar's perspective, but emphasize a concern for personal salvation without relating it to the kind of just social relationships which ought to follow.

The book needs to be read by a church that is at present strongly in a position of economic, social, and political power.

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*The Mennonite Brethren Church in Zaire.* By J. B. Toews. Fresno, Calif.: General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978, 255 pp., \$7.95 (pb)

### Reviewed by Peter Kroeker

This volume is the second in a series designed to update the history of Mennonite Brethren mission and church growth. It is complementary to Melvin Loewen, *Three Score—the Story of an Emerging Church in Central Africa* (Elkhart: Congo Inland Mission, 1972).

Part One describes the political and economic setting of Zaire. A short second chapter relates the background of Catholic and Protestant missions. The subject matter is dealt with in a superficial manner and serves as an introduction rather than a serious attempt at finding the roots of the problem of integrating Christian values in the Zairian culture.

The second section is the history of the beginning of Mennonite Brethren missions in Central Africa. Toews deals at some length with the pioneering work in the two areas where individual missionaries established their activities independently; how these fields came to be taken over by the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions, and how the field was expanded until the time of independence in 1960.

Toews describes how missionaries Janzen and Bartsch approached their tasks, giving insight into the problems of pioneering in new areas in the first half of this century. But some of the pertinent details which are of particular interest for a student of early missionary methods are missing or mentioned only in passing. He mentions the "kipoy" and that Africans carried Bartsch in it. But other sources are needed to find that it required 12 men (three shifts of four men) to carry a missionary to the village. He does not mention the other carriers for tents, food, and supplies nor the cooks and personal servants often required on these village trips. He does not mention the "gifts" missionaries frequently gave to encourage church attendance. He does not point out that priority in schools was given to professing Christians and that, as education came to be seen as the avenue towards upward mobility, this policy encouraged hypocrisy on the part of the students intent on obtaining an education. The introduction of the various Western institutions into the church structure during this period has had a bearing on church problems encountered today.

Perhaps Toews' defense of missionaries during this period is too strong. He stresses, for example, that the missionaries

"carried deep concerns for the establishment of the indigenous church in Zaire" (p. 131), but the record shows that in the important decision of whether missions should accept government school subsidies in 1949 and again in 1952, only missionaries voted (pp. 106-7). He seems to accept as established fact that resolutions regarding an indigenous church actually determined the attitudes of missionaries in their everyday interaction with Africans.

The third section records details of the transition of the church to indigenous status, difficulties encountered by the church during the rebellion of 1963-65, and subsequent growth of the church. The question again arises whether the status of missionaries vis-a-vis the African really changed much. This reviewer's opinion is that missionaries continued to control decisions in spite of the apparent change in ascribed status of African leaders.

This section would have provided an excellent opportunity for Toews to assess the relief activities following the rebellion and the subsequent socioeconomic assistance given by the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions in conjunction with other agencies. Instead, he merely mentions the two organizations in passing and quotes a selected comment by an African leader in dismissing this area of ministry.

There are lapses on the part of the editor in correcting fuzzy syntax (e.g., p. 75, par. 1) and errors in factual information (e.g., the elevation of Kikandji is closer to 1,250 feet above sea level than the 250 stated on page 46).

This history is designed for study groups, and the questions posed at the end of each chapter are pertinent to the problems faced by missions today. The study guide in Appendix A is an excellent summary of problems and issues and could be used by church study groups to good advantage.

In spite of some missed opportunities in analyzing the more critical problems faced by the Mennonite Brethren Church in Zaire, J. B. Toews is to be commended for recording much valuable information on its historical background. The book is a welcome addition to the records of our history.

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Peter Kroeker recently received his doctorate in anthropology from Kansas State University. Formerly a businessman and mayor of Winkler, Manitoba, Kroeker has spent several years in economic development in Zaire under Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services and is currently consultant for development for MBM/S.

# Editorial

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This issue of MISSION FOCUS introduces a new series. During its first six years, MISSION FOCUS appeared five times per year beginning in September. With Volume 7 we begin a new pattern of quarterly publication—March, June, September, and December. A seven-member editorial council will guide MISSION FOCUS. The council represents a wide range of experience, educational background, and church-related assignments.

MISSION FOCUS readership has grown to include people round the world engaged in a variety of tasks and from a wide range of ecclesiastical traditions. The editorial council welcomes communications from readers as a means of helping us to know our audience better and because we believe we learn through dialogue.

As we look toward the 1980s we are compelled to ask what kind of world will we face and what implications this will have for the worldwide mission of the church? In the first place, the reorientation process set in motion by World War I is still not completed. The first world war broke European colonialism's hold on the rest of the world—even though it took another generation to wind up that era—and raised a standard against the right of any nation to control the destiny of another nation. The spirit of "manifest destiny" and of special vocation to be guardian to more "backward" peoples dies hard. It inveigles its way into the mythology of every powerful and dominant nation. But the twin rights of personal and national self-determination have taken root in the soil of human experience everywhere. The flexing of political muscles by nationalist movements and the subsequent transfer of power from colonial to national governments since 1945 has filled this era with constant tension. Many of these trouble spots remain.

Political power has always been paired off with economic power. But in the past several decades huge corporations with holdings in many countries have become a major economic force in the world economy. For many of the newly-independent nations, the transnational companies represent the new form of colonialism which contributes to continued instability and violence. The approaching worldwide crisis over sources of energy—of which the 1973-74 oil crisis was but a preview—promises to keep the world community at odds with itself for a number of years.

The September 1977 issue of the *Annals of the*

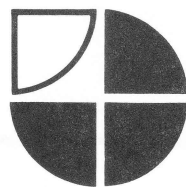
*American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* featured the theme of "ethnicity" in today's world. *Annals* reported that ethnic differences are the single most important source of conflict within nations today. The worldwide phenomenon of ethnic consciousness cannot be viewed with a detached attitude when it powers conflict on such a massive scale.

Already before World War II Archbishop William Temple observed that the "great new fact of our time" was the emergence of the church throughout the world. Temple's observation was first of all a tribute to the missionary movement. But it also called attention to an important shift in our understanding of the nature of the church which has immediate implications for missionary action. We could settle for a purely national interpretation of Christian mission. During the era of Western economic and political expansion, Western Christians sent missions to other parts of the world. Now that we have come to the end of that era, we would be prudent to tend to our responsibilities in our own nations. But the "great new fact" pointed to a transformation of the meaning of **church**. It said that we were now at a point when not only theologically could we speak about the universal nature of the church; we were actually part of a people which defied national boundaries, daring to think about the carrying out of Christ's last commission to his disciples on a new basis. The 1980s should be a time when we take concrete steps to act in the light of this great new fact.

In his historical study, *The Believers' Church* (Macmillan, 1968), Donald F. Durnbaugh suggests that a radical brand of Protestantism has existed since New Testament times. He summarizes believers church characteristics under eight heads: 1. lordship of Christ, 2. authority of the word, 3. restitution of the church, 4. separation from the world, 5. living for the world, 6. covenant of believers, 7. fellowship of the saints, and 8. relation to other Christians (in James L. Garrett, Jr., *The Concept of the Believers' Church*, Herald Press, 1969, Appendix II, 322 f.). This perspective forces us to return to the living word and the written word. It defines the existence of the church as being for the world but insists that only by rejecting the world's standards and claims can it truly be a servant. John Driver's article seeks to set the stage for an ongoing examination of what it will mean to be a missionary people in the 1980s and beyond. —Wilbert R. Shenk



# MISSION FOCUS



## Church Growth and God's Kingdom

WILBERT R. SHENK

### Is the church's mission to grow?

Concern for the growth of the church is not new. Ever since the Antioch church commissioned their first apostles (Acts 13), the church has been asking how the people with whom the witness has been shared have responded to the gospel. A sending church can only rejoice when they hear how the Spirit has "opened a door of faith" to any people through apostolic witness.

What are the grounds for this rejoicing? Did the early church rejoice in church growth? Are we focusing on the correct issue when we speak about church growth as it is used in the growing body of church growth studies?

This brief study begins with the question: What is the basis for church growth? The message and ministry of Jesus took the kingdom of God as the point of departure. The Great Commission Jesus gave to his disciples at the end of his earthly ministry stands in continuity with this beginning premise. What connection exists between Christian mission and our Lord's prayer, "Your kingdom come, your will be done?"

If kingdom is the prior term, then church growth will find its proper meaning and purpose in relation to the "reign of God." We must take seriously the coming of God's reign and seek to understand the signs of God's presence and how they are manifested in the life of the church. In that perspective church growth takes on a richer and fuller meaning.

### Biblical basis for church growth

**The Mission of the church is derivative;** it is not the church's creation. Jesus Christ, as Lord of the church, has given the church its missionary nature and vocation; he sent the church into the world. Furthermore, the content and form of the mission of the church derive from the

mission of God in Jesus Christ. God revealed himself as a missionary God by sending the Son into the world (Jn 1; 3:16f; 17:18; 20:21). The Gospel of John emphasizes the role of Jesus Christ in both creation and redemption. The work of Christ in redemption required that he be **sent** in recognizable human form to a particular place and time, there to be revealed as God's unique provision for our salvation. Theology of mission must be anchored in the mission of God in Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the missionary movement in modern times has lacked a clear theological base. It is only in the past generation that we have come to see that missionary action must begin with the nature and purpose of **God** and not as a subdivision within practical theology.

**Jesus' approach to mission is authoritative for us.** The Synoptic Gospels show Jesus inaugurating his ministry through a series of interrelated events which reveal his purpose and the content of his mission. By publicly receiving baptism at the hands of John the Baptist, Jesus identified himself with the prophetic tradition. But John also pointed out the discontinuity between Jesus and himself. He declared that Jesus would baptize with "the Holy Spirit and with fire." What sealed Jesus' messiahship was the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life. Christ/Messiah means "anointed one." At his baptism the Voice announced that he was "Son of God" (Ps 27 and Is 42:1). God identifies with the people in the form of a suffering servant. That the Son of God was also the suffering servant was completely misunderstood by the Jews. But this is the way in which he chose to express his saviorhood.

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This public declaration of Jesus as Messiah led immediately to a confrontation with Satan. "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil (Lk 4:1f). Two kinds of power emanating from two contrasting sources were displayed. Immediately following the encounter between Jesus and Satan, Jesus began his public ministry in Galilee:

**Matthew 4:17, 23**

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.

**Mark 1:14-15**

Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

**Luke 4:16-19**

And he came to Nazareth . . . and he went to the synagogue. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

In his first utterances Jesus identified the **kingdom of God** as both the object and the content of his messiahship. In Luke's version of the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Jesus linked himself with the messianic vision of Isaiah and other Old Testament prophets. This is simply a way of describing what Matthew and Mark assume when they say, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" and "The time is fulfilled." The age of the Messiah would be the time when the new order of God's salvation would be fully experienced, including elimination of social, physical, and personal problems.

The way to the realization of the kingdom, however, is through the cross. The Messiah willingly gave up life itself. Therein he revealed how he deals with humankind

and will reign in the life of his people. The ultimate proof that he is Messiah, that he is truly the "anointed one" who is full of the Holy Spirit, is that the Holy Spirit resurrected him, thus offering hope and life to all who acknowledge him as Lord and accept his rule in their lives. The kingdom of God is the great unifying theme of Jesus' life and mission.

Immediately following the inauguration, Jesus set about gathering together a group of disciples, preaching to the crowds, healing, and delivering people from Satan's power. The Gospel of Mark emphasizes Jesus' ministry of exorcism. Through the Messiah the power of God was confronting and defeating the power of Satan.

When Jesus commissioned the twelve and the seventy (Mt 10:5-15; Mk 6:7-13; Lk 9:1-6, 10:1-12), he instructed them to carry on the ministry in which he was engaged.

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## MISSION FOCUS



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The several forms of the Great Commission adhere to this same pattern. Jesus came to inaugurate the kingdom of God, and his disciples shared in announcing the kingdom and demonstrating the meaning of the kingdom.

**Meaning of the kingdom of God.** Even though Jesus began his ministry by preaching the kingdom of God, we look in vain for a definition of what "kingdom" meant to him. It is evident that his hearers were familiar with the idea; he could assume they understood what he was referring to. The phrase "kingdom of God" does not occur in the Old Testament, but the idea of God as King occurs frequently. Some Old Testament passages describe God as King while others speak of the day when God will become king and reign over his people. The Old Testament recognizes God, therefore, as the only true God and King, but at the same time recognizes that not everyone acknowledges his kingship. He chose to manifest his kingship through Israel, yet even Israel frequently fell away and rebelled in spite of their special covenant relationship with God. The prophets of Israel continued to call Israel back to God. They told of the coming of the Messiah who would radically alter the structures of life and enable people to live together in love and justice because God himself would dwell in their midst.

Thus the kernel idea of the kingdom of God is found in the Old Testament. What had long been anticipated had arrived in Jesus' person and ministry. "Kingdom of God" refers simply to the reign or rule of God. According to G. E. Ladd, **God's Kingdom, his reign, has already come into history in the person and mission of Jesus. The presence of God's Kingdom means the dynamic presence of his reign. It means that God is no longer waiting for men to submit to his reign but has taken the initiative and has invaded history in a new and unexpected way. The Kingdom of God is not merely an abstract concept that God is the eternal King and rules over all; it is also a dynamic concept of the acting God** (1964:140).

The kingdom of God is to be understood eschatologically. It was inaugurated by Jesus but has not yet reached its fulfillment. The earthly ministry of Jesus marked the "beginning of the end." All that Jesus did while on earth and all that he commissioned his people to do point toward that consummation which his coming again will bring. In this light, the Christian interprets present experience and all history in light of the *parousia*, Christ's return. The pull of the future—what we call hope—continually bears on what we are doing. This means that we must live in a tension between the "now" and the "not yet." Whenever the church becomes preoccupied with the "now" and loses touch with the "not yet," it loses power and a sense of direction. It identifies church with kingdom, and the church becomes the center of its concern and action. If the church concentrates on the "not yet," it attempts to flee the world. The kingdom is now present, but it is visible only to the "eyes of faith." Much of the world is unaware of the kingdom of God. The church becomes confused and without sure direction the moment it no longer has a vision of the kingdom coming in fullness and power.

The kingdom of God is supernatural. Humanly speaking, we cannot manipulate it or control it. We can only submit to God's reign. Ladd has collected biblical references to the kingdom which describe its chief characteristics:

The Kingdom can draw near to men  
(Mt 3:2; 4:17; Mk 1:15, etc.);  
it can

come (Mt 6:10; Lk 17:20; etc.),  
arrive (Mt 12:28),  
appear (Lk 19:11),  
be active (Mt 11:12).

God can give the Kingdom to men (Mt 21:43; Lk 12:32),  
but men do not give the Kingdom to one another.

Furthermore, God can take the Kingdom away from men  
(Mt 21:43),

but men do not take it away from one another,  
although they can prevent others from entering it.

Men can enter the Kingdom (Mt 5:20; 7:21, Mk 9:47;  
10:23, etc.),

but they are never said to erect it or to build it.

Men can

receive the Kingdom (Mk 10:15; Lk 18:17),  
inherit it (Mt 25:34), and  
possess it (Mt 5:4),

but they are never to establish it.

Men can

reject the Kingdom, i.e.,  
refuse to receive it (Lk 10:11), or  
enter it (Mt 23:13),

but they cannot destroy it.

They can

look for it (Lk 23:51),  
pray for its coming (Mt 6:10), and  
seek it (Mt 6:33; Lk 12:31),

but they cannot bring it.

Men may be in the Kingdom

(Mt 5:19; 8:11; Lk 13:29; etc.),

but we are not told that the Kingdom grows.

Men can do things for the sake of the Kingdom  
(Mt 19:12; Lk 18:29),

but they are not said to act upon the Kingdom itself.

Men can preach the Kingdom (Mt 10:7; Lk 10:9),  
but only God can give it to men (Lk 12:32).

(1964:189)

The kingdom of God is a mystery. It is not easy to grasp the meaning of the reign of God. Both the masses and the religious leaders of Jesus' day failed to catch the meaning of Jesus and his message. Though Jesus addressed his ministry to everyone, only a few responded. Jesus taught about the kingdom using parables rather than giving abstract definitions and principles. These parables of the kingdom lifted the veil of mystery only for those to whom faith was given to receive the meaning and to submit to God's call.

**Parables of growth.** One group of parables Jesus told are known as the parables of growth (Mt 13 and Mk 4). Each one makes a point about the nature of the kingdom. Scholars have puzzled over these parables for many years and have failed to reach consensus as to how to interpret them. We can draw a number of general conclusions, however, based on these parables of growth:

1. The mustard seed
2. The leaven
3. The seed growing secretly
4. The dragnet
5. The tares
6. The sower



It would take us beyond our purposes here to review each of these parables in detail. They are not to be treated as blueprints for action. Jesus used these parables to teach his disciples and the crowds what the kingdom of God meant.

1. The parables draw a sharp contrast between popular expectations of the messianic reign and God's design. For example, the people of Israel expected that when the Messiah came he would crush all of Israel's enemies, guarantee Israel's political preeminence and prosperity; the nations would seek shelter with the Israelites and join in worship of the God of Israel. Jesus offered no such national salvation. In fact, he spoke of the Messiah as a servant, one who was coming in weakness and humility. His kingdom appeared to them to be as weak and insignificant as the mustard seed. To the vast majority this kind of kingdom was incredible since it diverged so sharply from traditional expectations.

2. God has provided for order and growth in organic life. Similarly, he has a plan for the world, a plan for salvation, in which he is leading history toward a consummation and a new aeon. The parables do not focus on growth as such, however. Growth is assumed as a normal condition. The whole of history is moving toward a climax. Jesus inaugurated "the beginning of the end," and that end is still to come. Meanwhile kingdom activity continues. Jesus discouraged all attempts to speculate about the timetable or fix the date for its consummation. He directed his disciples to call people to repentance and conversion.

3. The growth pictured in the parables is not gradualism or evolution, a process of uninterrupted movement toward a goal. The kingdom is moving toward a climax with fixed purpose. But a power struggle is on, and there are times of tribulation and catastrophe. Growth in the kingdom comes not from the normal forces of history but from God's own creative action. The outcome of history is in his hand. He will determine the end point. Meanwhile he is continuing to act in the affairs of humankind.

4. The meaning of the kingdom can be grasped only through the eyes of faith. The kingdom remains a mystery to natural man. Jesus resorted to parables to try to teach the meaning of the kingdom. Even the disciples had to be told repeatedly what the kingdom was. Yet God does grant faith and hope to those who respond to his invitation to live under his reign as his people. When Jesus told the parable of the soils (Mk 4:3-9), he stressed the importance of hearing the word of God aright. According to C. E. B. Cranfield, **What we have here is a parable on hearing the Word of God, the Gospel of the Kingdom, which Jesus both preaches and is. It is directed to the multitudes, not just to the disciples (though it was relevant to them too). The hearer is challenged to ask himself, "What sort of ground am I?" and let himself be the good ground. That is not to deny that it is only by God's gift that any man is good soil—does hear aright, does have faith** (cf. Mk 10:27) (1951:404). It makes a difference whether people accept or reject the kingdom. Not all who hear the gospel will respond positively to it.

5. The parables of growth emphasize the secondary role the individual plays in sowing the seed, in leavening the dough. The growth process itself remains a secret and is in someone else's control. The results will be revealed only at the end of history.

**Kingdom and church.** The relationship of church to kingdom has been the subject of controversy and confusion. Some people hold them to be two terms for the same thing. But Scripture does not equate church and kingdom. They are intimately related but two distinct realities. When Jesus dispatched his disciples on their first missionary journeys, he did not instruct them to preach the gospel of the church but the gospel of the kingdom. The Synoptic Gospels scarcely mention the church, although mission is referred to several times. The Synoptic writers consider kingdom to be a main theme. The post-Pentecost church never confused church and kingdom. Acts 8:12 reports that Philip "preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" to the Samaritans who responded and were baptized into the faith (Cf. Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31). Kingdom and church often exist in a tension one with the other. The apostate church bears false witness to the kingdom and falls under judgment by the kingdom. In the present age the church never fully expresses the reality of God's reign. We can identify four aspects of this relationship between kingdom and church. (See Ladd 1964:258-73 for full exposition.)

First, the kingdom creates the church. The kingdom is God's dynamic rule in history to which he invites men and women to respond. It comes in answer to the hopes of humankind for a new order of existence. Those who respond to the divine invitation are incorporated into God's people on earth, the church. The church is, therefore, the people of the kingdom; but some individuals may find their way into the church who are not committed to the kingdom; they may be baptized into the church as babies or join the church out of impure or immature motives. Committing oneself to the kingdom indeed involves participating in the life of the church, but participation in the church is no guarantee that an individual is living under God's rule.

Second, the church witnesses to the kingdom. The church is called to witness to the world concerning God's rule. People who speak about "building the kingdom" betray not simply an imprecise use of terms; they do not grasp clearly the distinctive character of the kingdom and that of the church. The Christian witness cannot establish or build the kingdom of God. Only God can do that. The church is called to proclaim joyfully God's rule. It is good news because it alone offers salvation from a world which is death-bound. The church illustrates what the reign of God means by reciting the acts of God in the past and pointing to his promises in the future. The church tells of what it has touched, seen, and heard (1 Jn 1:2-3). To the extent that the church exhibits in its own life the reality of the rule of God, it visibly demonstrates what the kingdom is doing.

Third, the church is the instrument of the kingdom. The church does not simply function as a news reporter for the kingdom, telling of kingdom events. The church is caught up in kingdom action. Jesus commissioned his body to continue doing the works he had begun. Following Pentecost the disciples are reported as having preached and healed and cast out demons in the same way Jesus did. The church does not escape the tension and struggle between the two kingdoms. The fact that history testifies that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church" proves that faithful Christians have engaged in this

struggle as members of the kingdom itself. Participation in the kingdom will involve suffering. The Holy Spirit guides the church in this witness to and identification with the kingdom.

Fourth, the church acts under the authority of the kingdom. In the Old Testament the nation of Israel was steward of the rule of God, which was committed to Israel through the law. Jesus selected disciples to whom he gave "keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:19). Jesus entrusted to his disciples his authority, based on spiritual knowledge. Christ's followers themselves have entered the kingdom and are, therefore, able to enter into the struggles of others as they encounter the gospel of the kingdom. The gospel is not to be treated lightly. It is not the possession of the church. The church itself was created by the gospel and can remain true to its calling only by sharing the gospel of the kingdom with others, for the King's message is for all people. The church experiences its most vital solidarity with the King when carrying out the King's wishes.

**Kingdom and mission.** If the kingdom of God was basic to Jesus' life and ministry, we need to examine the missiological implications of the kingdom for the church.

1. God has a purpose and plan for the world which he is effecting by introducing his rule on earth. The complement to God's rule is the response of his people whom the Apostle Paul declares were elected "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1:4b). The King has a people who acknowledge his sovereignty over them.

2. The context for mission is the cosmic struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. Christ is displacing Satan's rule by his own. This struggle is being carried on within history. The principalities and powers oppose the kingship of Christ. To announce the gospel of the kingdom is to declare war on the kingdom of this world. Even though the triumph of the kingdom of God is assured, the church must expect to face continual opposition and persecution during this time when the kingdom of the world is still active. To call men and women to citizenship in the kingdom of God is to force them to choose. The two kingdoms are antithetical, and the individual cannot maintain loyalty to both simultaneously.

3. Jesus began his ministry by challenging Satan's kingship. In his encounter with Satan in the wilderness, Jesus resisted all of Satan's overtures to worship him. From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus engaged in exorcism of demons, directly confronting Satan and his minions. Immediately after calling his disciples, Jesus faced the challenge of power (Mk 3:20-27; Mt 12:22-28). Most fundamental of all, Jesus called men and women to renounce their allegiance to the prince of this world and submit to the reign of God. The New Testament amply documents the relationship between witness and opposition. Each wave of expansion of the church was preceded by persecution (Acts 8:1-3; 12; Cf. Mk 13:9f, Rev 5:8-13).

4. Jesus preached and healed. Through preaching he explained to his audiences the good news about the kingdom of God. This came as good news because it

offered an alternative to the bondages of this world. Jesus healed the people. Salvation in the kingdom of God involves the whole person. Healing demonstrated the power of the kingdom over death and evil and pointed to the time when shalom would be experienced. The missionary witness to the kingdom of God must always include both the word preached and the word demonstrated.

5. The kingdom is not yet present in its fullness. Mission derives its validity from this fact. Mission is carried on during this interim. The age of the Holy Spirit—the period since Pentecost—is the missionary age. The missionary witnesses to the kingdom as revealed in Jesus Christ in his first coming and in his promised return. The kingdom of this world has been routed but not yet banished. This is the day of decision when men and women must declare their loyalties. When Jesus Christ comes again he will consummate his work of redemption and judgment, and those who have elected to serve Jesus Christ as Lord will experience the kingdom in its fullness.

6. Scripture offers no grand strategy or plan of action for introducing the reign of God on earth. Even growth is not a primary focus. What Jesus did was to commission his disciples to live out the reign of God in their lives and interpret that reality to people throughout the world until his return. Scripture emphasizes that the faithfulness of the church is closely linked to mission. The church is not called to succeed but to be faithful. To be faithful is to be missionary. To be missionary is to risk martyrdom.

**The mission of the church.** In the section, "Kingdom and Church" we noted the close relationship of the two. The church is the instrument of the kingdom and, therefore, the church has no mission except to serve the kingdom of God. Within this framework we will briefly consider three observations about the nature of the church.

1. Beginning with Abraham, God has been calling out a people. God chose "a wandering Aramean," an insignificant individual from an obscure tribe. Not only did God call a man with no particular assets to commend him; he was a man without a future since his wife was barren and he had no legitimate descendants. Yet God called Abraham and promised to make him the father of a mighty nation: "And by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (Gen 12:3b). God's election of Abraham was an act of sheer grace and it was election to serve rather than merely to receive God's favors. Israel was to be a "sign to the peoples" and a means of spreading the knowledge of God to other peoples. The people of God are always elected in order to serve the Lord.

2. The New Testament describes church and mission as a unity. As Johannes Blauw wrote, "There is no other Church than the Church sent into the world, and there is no other mission than that of the Church of Christ" (1962:121). In the past, the church has found it difficult to keep this unity alive. A static, non-missionary understanding of the church has dominated Protestantism from the time of the Reformation. Consequently, in Protestantism missionary service has been carried out by agencies which were largely independent of the church. But a close study of the New Testament shows that the church's mission is not one activity among many legitimate responsibilities; mission is the basis for judging all activities. When Jesus



entrusted responsibility to the church, his body, for continuing his ministry in the world (Jn 20:19-22), he assigned to it the awesome task of maintaining with singular clarity this unity of mission and church.

3. The church has a four-fold nature. First, the church is by nature to be a witness. The New Testament employs some 30 different terms to describe the ministry of the word; three are most representative: to herald, to announce good tidings, and to witness. In each case the one who witnesses does so under the mandate of a superior and is the instrument for transmitting the news concerning events. It is news of importance and calls for action. Second, the church is by nature to be a fellowship. *Koinonia* is that context in which our relationships with God intersect our relationships with one another. The New Testament uses four words, each of which defines one part of the meaning of *koinonia*: fellowship, communion, participation, and contribution. Within the Christian fellowship members are to live out the divine life which they hold in common. *Koinonia* is to become a way of life, a powerful object lesson to the world concerning the new community God is creating. Third, the church is by nature to be a servant. This feature immediately sets the church off from the world. Jesus' kind of messiahship was rejected by the majority of people because he came as a servant and insisted on serving. The church is called to follow its Lord in service, through genuine identification with those being served. Fourth, the church is by nature called to struggle for justice, for the righteousness of God is to be expressed in the life of his people through just relationships. The world knows little of justice. The cries of the poor and the oppressed rise up continually before God. The church is called to demonstrate before the world the meaning of salvation, including the new order of relationships it brings.

The nature of the church is demonstrably missionary. Rather than describing a specific strategy or plan for world evangelization, the New Testament provides a dynamic description of the church in action through witness, service, fellowship, and righteous/just living. The Holy Spirit was the motive power sending the church out so the message of the kingdom of God spread further and further.

**Is it the mission of the church to grow?** The New Testament holds before the church a vision of a world dominated by unbelief and in bondage to Satan. It enjoins the church to be a witness to freedom and new life in Christ. God loves the world. This he proved in sending his Son to redeem it. Jesus, in turn, gave to his disciples the mandate to show the same redemptive love to the world, calling men and women to accept God's rule in their lives. The call of the kingdom places a challenge to decision before all peoples. In the Bible we find the vision of an expanding movement of people from all nations, languages, and classes who now acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and are living under his reign.

Scripture describes another kind of growth. It speaks of "growing up into him in all things" (Eph 4:15); the disciple is called to "grow in grace and knowledge" (2 Pet 3:18). The believer is destined to progress from immaturity to maturity, from being a child to becoming adult in discipleship. At best the kingdom of God is a mystery, but the meaning of the kingdom and its claims on

the lives of men and women become clearer as it is mediated through discipleship.

We need to note more closely the phenomenon of growth. A living organism changes and grows. When a body loses its vitality and can no longer produce new cells, it goes into decline and dies. However, we do not consider all kinds of growth good. The most malignant cancer grows the most rapidly. Many of the fastest growing religious movements in the world are cults and sects whose allegiance is not to the kingdom of God. As we noted earlier, it is possible for an individual or group to be counted as member(s) of the church without being under the reign of God. We must, therefore, look more carefully at growth and establish criteria for evaluating it.

When people are living under the reign of God, we can expect to see signs of the presence of the kingdom. As God gathers a people, they will give evidence that his Spirit is in them by producing the fruits of the Spirit. The following are among these signs of the kingdom.

1. A new community is being formed which rejects race, class, tribe, or nationality as the basis for its existence, which allows the Holy Spirit to destroy the "dividing wall of hostility" (Eph 2:14b). This does not involve a denial of cultural background. It means rather that these human differences are transcended through the grace of God while at the same time the individual is enabled to affirm his/her cultural heritage in a new way because it is viewed in the light of the lordship of Christ.

2. Shalom is being experienced. Members of the community are being saved as their profoundest spiritual, physical, and emotional needs are met.

3. The power of evil is being overcome. Evil powers are experienced in a variety of ways. These powers oppress and enslave. The kingdom is present when such oppression is dispelled and people are set free.

4. As witnesses to the kingdom, the community faces opposition. Witness to the kingdom leads to confrontation and persecution. The absence of such opposition and struggle is a sign that God's people are not engaged in witness.

5. Jesus Christ is being worshiped and acclaimed as Lord. Public declarations of loyalty to Jesus call other loyalties into question and require that they be relegated to secondary position or abandoned.

6. The prayer, "Your kingdom come," is continually being prayed. The kingdom is present in only incomplete form. The disciple community will constantly look forward to and pray for the coming of Christ and his kingdom in its fullness.

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# Mission in the Year 2000

GOTTFRIED OOSTERWAL

*We must consciously work toward creating the future we desire, or else the great decisions of the future will be made by someone else. If we refuse to take responsibility for the future, others will make the future, both theirs and ours.*—Hiley Ward in *Images of the Future*

## Three approaches to mission

At least three different approaches are open to deal with the topic of mission in the year 2000.

### 1. Consider the projected world situation

One way to look at the world in the year 2000 is as it appears in the writings of futurologists, and then consider its challenges to mission. From the descriptions given by such writers as Herman Kahn, Daniel Bell, Robert Heilbroner, and others, and the reports of the Club of Rome (*Limits to Growth*, 1972; *Mankind at the Turning Point*, 1974; *Reshaping the International Order*, 1976; *Beyond the Age of Waste*, 1977; *Goals for Mankind*, 1978), the world in the year 2000 may show the following characteristics: a population of 6.5 to 7 billion people, 80 percent of whom are non-Christians; a "global village" plagued by the most severe crisis of all human crises: megafamines; extreme poverty; great shortages of energy and resources; international monetary collapse; greatly limited personal freedom; strong dictatorial (governmental) control; a deep chasm between the rich countries and the poor; a city-civilization, dominated by science and technology, with their dehumanizing effects on all of life (automation, instability, violence, revolutions; a gap between generations and a chasm between classes of people; a breakdown of the nuclear family; and an

unstable social order, characterized by pluralism and experimentation.

The challenge these Dystopian forecasts present to mission is two-fold. The first challenge is: How shall we then worship and witness and serve? The second is: What can the church do **now** to prevent this catastrophic situation projected for the year 2000? The last report of the Club of Rome sees the only way out of the misery awaiting humankind in what it calls, "the religion-science led scenario": a cooperation between religious and scientific leaders to awaken the world to its near fatal predicament; religious leaders, hand in hand with scientists, will lead the way out of the bewildering maze of international crises into a future of hope. How can this be accomplished? The church can (1) make members aware of the global situation and enlist them for action and service now; (2) emphasize a genuinely biblical view of work, of stewardship, and of Christian responsibility; (3) create the right preconditions for a genuine biblical revival, renewal, and reformation affecting believers' total life and existence; (4) form Christian action groups which dare to become models of what God wants all people to be; (5) reflect anew on the biblical message of hope and of the coming of the kingdom of God.

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## 2. Consider the projections for church and mission

A second approach to the topic of mission in the year 2000 is to start with the projected situation of the church and its mission, and of Christianity in the year 2000. From literature on that topic, the following picture emerges.

The church's center of gravity will have shifted from the northern to the southern hemisphere, from the developed, rich world of Western Europe and North America to Africa, Central and South America, and Asia. That "third church" (Bühlmann) will be a flourishing and growing church, active, young, and dynamic. In Europe and in North America, however, the church will continue to decline, even among those conservative churches that show some numerical growth today. The two great bulwarks of Christianity in the year 2000 will be Africa—south of the Sahara—and South America.

A second characteristic of the church and its mission in the year 2000 will be a great diversification of Christian life and doctrine. This is intimately related to nationalism in the Third World and to the demand to build a church where people feel at home. Though the church will be more ecumenical than ever, it will also be more pluralistic and diverse, with African, Asian, and Latin American theologies flourishing beside European and American theologies.

As a result of the shift from the northern to the southern hemisphere and of the process of indigenization, the number of missionaries from the West to the Third World will be much smaller than it is today. In contrast, the number of Third World missionaries will have greatly increased.

The percentage of Christians in the world in the year 2000 is estimated at 15 to 20 percent of the world population, a sharp reduction from the 20 to 40 percent in the early 1900s. The majority of these non-Christians will live in Asia, followed by Europe and North America. In Europe hardly 10 percent and in North America not more than 25 percent of the population will have a meaningful relationship to the church.

Christianity in the year 2000 will thrive, not in one superstructure church, but rather in a large number of smaller denominations and indigenous religious movements. Their number will increase rather than decrease. Some futurologists see a further weakening of the World Council of Churches; others see a change in its function and role so that it will become primarily a "meetingplace" for Christians, a study center, and a symbol of unity.

The majority of these smaller churches, denominations, and religious movements in Christianity will be conservative, both in doctrine and in discipleship. This will result in a sharp polarization between Christianity and its surrounding culture, between church and society, between Christians and those who do not (or do no longer) believe. There will be frequent confrontations between Christians and leaders of government and society, especially over issues of social ethics, control, and law and order.

Though the percentage of Christians in the "free world" of Northern Europe, North America, and their "allies" will be small, the number of Christians in the "Eastern bloc" (China, USSR, Eastern Europe) will have greatly increased.

One hallmark of Christianity in the year 2000 will be its lay character, with emphasis on the local church as a

bulwark of outreach, action, and service.

The character of the church in the year 2000 will no longer be primarily institutional, with great emphasis on schools, hospitals, and other institutional activities. The church will much more be characterized by its nature as a pilgrim people in dispersion, as salt and yeast. Gone will be its central position in society. Instead, the church will be only one segment among many—a minority in the truest sense—and often only a group at the fringe of society. This development will restore, however, the awareness of the specific character of the church and of its true nature and mission.

Not a few believe these developments in the church (its minority and fringe status in society, the rediscovery of its true nature and mission, its challenge to and confrontations with society even to the point of civil disobedience) will culminate in a new wave of persecutions in many parts of the world. That state of affairs, described in the New Testament as the day of the antichrist, will lead to the full realization of the "Day of the Lord," the moment of Christ's glorious return and the establishment of his kingdom of glory.

This forecast regarding the church in the year 2000 challenges us not only to make the necessary preparations, individual and corporate, to be ready when that day arrives; it also challenges us to action to bring about the necessary corrections in these prognoses and projections. The church must not just wait for things to happen; it must actively participate in the shaping of its future.

What can the church do? It must seriously take stock of its present situation and dare to look with boldness at its own development and dynamics as the seeds of the future. Believers must be made aware of the real situation, and meetings, workshops, and retreats should be organized to counsel together about new styles and strategies for mission in light of the developing world situation. It is high time that the churches consider seriously their reasons for existence, not merely based on an inherited tradition, but on the Word of God and in light of the aim and purpose of the life and work and mission of Jesus Christ.

Once a clear "statement of mission" has been developed, priorities should be established, based on this statement, regarding places of labor and target groups for evangelism and mission, the kind of work to be done now and later, and the specific contents of our message and the forms of our mission. The laity should be prepared for their biblical role in the world now and in the future. This should also lead to changes in seminary training. Revival and reformation are perhaps our most urgent needs today. We have ample biblical, historical, and missiological evidence that these can be stimulated by creating three preconditions: Bible study, prayer, and fellowship (see Acts 2:42). This can best be accomplished by the formation of small groups as a basis for reflection, renewal, and missionary action.

## 3. Consider the past and the present

Each of these two approaches to the topic of mission in the year 2000 has its strengths. And these challenges can give us—besides food for thought—clear plans for action. Yet, I have chosen a third way to approach the issue. The weakness of these first two approaches, aside from the fact that each of them deals with either the church or the

world in isolation, is that they deal with the future as a series of events unrelated to our past and present.

But the year 2000 is not a future that comes upon us from outside our present realities and experiences. Instead that future comes about as a result of an interplay of the power of past habits and traditions and present dynamics and developments. The future of mission is not merely a prognosis or a projection; it is an outgrowth of past and present missionary activities. That future is a process of becoming and growing. And though mighty powers, visible and invisible, are at work to give that process of becoming and growing a certain shape and direction, it is still under the control of an almighty God who holds time in his hands. The church is called to participate in the mission of the One who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth and who bids us to go and make disciples from all nations, kindreds, and peoples. The future of mission, therefore, is partly in our hands. Its form and shape are to a large extent determined by the ways we shall act now, in response to the Word of God, and in relation to the actual conditions prevailing in the world today. This is the third approach to the topic of mission in the year 2000, an approach that takes seriously the new era beginning now.

### **A new era begun**

In our time at least four distinct periods in the history of humanity are coming to an end, and a whole new era has begun. By the year 2000 this new era will have developed to such an extent that it will shape the life, thoughts, and behavior of all people in the world, Christians and non-Christians, rich and poor, powerful and powerless. We must, therefore, take a look at this era now developing, as contrasted with the four periods that are now ending. Out of this analysis, then, will develop definite plans for actions and new strategies for mission.

#### **1. The end of Western dominance**

The era of Western dominance in the world has not only shaped the nature and form of all Christian mission; it has made the Christian church truly a world church, planted in nearly every country of the globe. At least four aspects of this Western dominance in the world can be distinguished: political dominance, economic dominance, technological dominance, and cultural dominance.

**Political dominance.** Christian missions spread and developed hand in hand with the colonial expansion of the West. This has had many advantages: accessibility of the world population to missionaries, protection (*pax britanica*), social status, Christianization of life as part of Westernization, freedom of mission, and government support. That political dominance is gone. More than 100 new nations have come into existence during the last two decades. Gone with colonialism are also the specific "privileges" of Western missionaries and churches. We are thrown back on the only basis of strength: the gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. What kind of missionary is needed now?

**Economic dominance.** The economic dominance of the West is still present and felt, though to a lesser degree. But economic dominance is now interpreted as oppression and injustice. The advantage has turned into a disadvantage. What does missionary identification mean to a "rich Westerner" called to live and work among the

hungry, the poor, and the downtrodden? Where will the church be in the developing revolution?

**Technological dominance.** The advantages for mission of Western technological superiority are well-known. Millions have been attracted to the powerful "God of the West" by schools, hospitals, and technological assistance. That superiority is now waning; a clear distinction is now made between technology and the Christian religion. This has led to a "purification" of Christian mission work. But again the question arises: What kind of missionary is needed today and tomorrow in light of these developments?

**Cultural dominance.** Also the cultural dominance of the West is gone. In its stead a strong cultural nationalism is developing to give new nations foundations to build on and unity to live by. The advantages of the past cultural dominance to mission are obvious, and new cultural nationalism poses obstacles and threats. This cultural nationalism has the positive effect of making the national church a place where people feel at home. But among these dangers are the development of national churches and theologies (African, Asian, Latin American), the captivity of the churches, and the development of many small churches and religious movements over cultural issues rather than theologies. What will the role of the missionary be in these situations? How can we help the indigenous church and the developing religious movements remain rooted in the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ? What can we learn? What kind of missionary is needed?

#### **2. The end of the agrarian age**

The era of the agrarian age is replaced by the age of technopolis: the urban society shaped by science and technology. Most churches and missions reflect this agrarian age, its ethos, and its mentality. How can we become prepared for the age of technopolis, its ethos, attitudes, and expectations?

Two aspects of this new age deserve special attention, since they will greatly affect missions in the year 2000: the rapid increase of the world population and urbanization.

**Rapid increase of population.** At the time of Christ, the world population amounted to some 250 million people. In the 1850s the world population reached the billion mark. A hundred years later it was 3 billion. Today there are already 4.5 billion people in the world. The net annual increase is about 80 million, or 200,000 a day. By the year 2000 there will be 6.5 to 7 billion people. Mission today and tomorrow is mission to the millions. What kind of strategies, plans, and methods are needed? Can "push-button" evangelism do the work of the "missionary"; can indirect evangelism do the work personal contact has done?

Most of these millions live in poverty and die hungry. What kind of mission outreach will speak to these immediate needs: agricultural mission? technological development? nation building? Who will do the work: lay people? What will be the role of medical missions in health education, community development, environmental control, preventive medicine, small and mobile clinics, and the development of physician-assistants?

**Urbanization.** The growth of the world population is about two percent. That of the cities is 10 to 15 percent. Japan is an example of development in the year 2000.



Already nearly 40 percent of Asia and 35 percent of Africa is urban! How shall people then live? What will be the effect of the growing "circles of misery" in the cities, slums, shantytowns, and squatter areas, with their lack of facilities, shelter, work, food, and hope? What kind of a church is needed? What kind of a message? How can the church reach out to these people?

A two-pronged approach is needed. First, we must develop strong agricultural and industrial programs and educational and recreational facilities in the rural areas. This may stem the flow of people from the rural to the urban areas. Second, we must develop plans to reach out to the cities through fellowship groups, house-churches, neighborhood programs, social services, youth programs, church-clinics, and university centers. Believers must be prepared for the new attitudes and the new mentality required for living and working in the cities.

### *3. The end of the era of capitalism*

The era of capitalism, with its free enterprise, private ownership, profit-making, individualism, and competition, will end. In its stead the age of socialism has begun, evident in its many forms in places like Great Britain, USSR, China, Indonesia, Burma, Tanzania, Jamaica, and Cuba. In most forms of socialism the national resources belong to the people (nation). Governments limit the differences in income and other privileges such as health care and education, private ownership, and individual rights.

Missions in the past have profited from the capitalist era. With the passing of the era, missions have lost also the two pillars of traditional strength: schools and hospitals. What kind of mission is best suited for the socialist age? Some answers may be cooperation with governments, smaller operations, "outpost" evangelism, or mission as the work of the laity.

### *4. The end of the era of belief*

The passing of the age of belief is truly a unique development in the history of humanity. Though there is ample evidence that the "true believer" is a rare phenomenon, and will be in the future, traditional religions are losing their effect universally. Anti-church and anti-religion movements are rampant. The question may be asked: Will there still be believers in the year 2000?

The secularization of life means at least four things: declining church membership, religion's loss of influence on life and society, loss of faith, and the desacralization of life. The outlook is not all bleak, though. Among the most remarkable phenomena in secularized Western Europe, for instance, are the enormous sales of Bibles, the rise of Bible study groups, and the influence of Scripture's teaching on society.

Churches would do well to recognize these phenomena, both in their negative and positive aspects. Indeed there are losses of faith and influence of religion on society. On the positive side, however, there is an increase in personal religion, a search for genuinely biblical answers to today's problems, a longing for a new hope, and a new certainty which people expect to find in Scripture. The open secularism has had a purifying and sifting effect. The church cannot but rejoice over these challenges in the secular age. The shape of things to come will depend a great deal on the church's ability to become truly a servant, to lose itself, and to develop forms and structures which will be meaningful to people in this age of unbelief.

### **Mission with genuine spirituality**

We must go beyond the question: How shall we then work and worship and serve? The real challenge to mission today, in light of past traditions and present developments, is: What kind of mission would we plan for? What kind of missionaries are needed for this new day and age?

The greatest and the most urgent need is a revival of a genuine spirituality. Now that political, economic, technological, and cultural advantages of mission are gone, the church is thrown back for the first time since it began on the power of the Christian message itself and on its dependence on the Holy Spirit. The church can and must stimulate preconditions that may lead to a revival of primitive Christianity by fostering Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. The best way to accomplish this is through the formation of small groups.

Second, churches must be made aware of the real situations, developments, and challenges. This requires searching for new approaches to Christian education, a task which should be encouraged in each church or group of churches.

Third, the biblical role of the laity should be re-discovered as a foundation for a charismatic renewal and lay action. For every door being closed now to the career missionary, thousands of doors for an effective ministry of the laity are open.

Fourth, a renewed awareness should be stimulated in the churches concerning the reason for their existence. Plans for action should be built on a genuine biblical theology of mission.

Finally, amid all these changes, challenges, new developments, and dynamics, the Lord is in control. If the challenges seem too complex and the developments too bewildering, let our eyes remain fixed upon the Lord and his promise, "Lo, I am with you, until the end of time." He is the Alpha and Omega of mission. He started his work of restoration; he will also finish it. To him be the glory.

# Chronicle

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## **Missionary Study Fellowship**

**March 7-9, 1979**

### **Theme: A Christian Approach to Other Religions**

Some 30 missions administrators, missionaries, and professors participated in the ninth Mennonite Missionary Study Fellowship (MMSF) on the campus of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana, March 7-9, 1979. Many students also participated.

Sponsored by the Institute of Mennonite Studies (IMS), 3003 Benham Avenue, Elkhart, IN 46514, MMSF is an informal fellowship of persons interested in Christian mission, meeting annually for a three-day conference on issues central to their task.

Henry Poettcker, Mennonite Biblical Seminary president, opened the meeting with a devotional based on Colossians 1:15-23. IMS Director C. J. Dyck moderated the sessions.

Developing the theme, **A Christian Approach to other Religions**, the following presentations were made:

#### **A Christian Approach to the Jews**

by Roy Kreider,

Mennonite Board of Missions worker in Israel

Response by John H. Yoder, Elkhart, Indiana

#### **A Christian Approach to Islam**

by Roelf Kuitse, Elkhart, Indiana (Netherlands),

Director of the Overseas Mission Training Center

Response by Calvin Shenk, Harrisonburg, Virginia

#### **A Christian Approach to Marxism**

By Marlin Jeschke, Goshen, Indiana,

Goshen College professor of philosophy and religion

Response by Peter J. Dyck, Akron, Pennsylvania

#### **A Christian Approach to Native North American Religions**

by Larry Hart, Clinton, Oklahoma,

staff person for the Mennonite Leaders' Council; and

Menno Wiebe, Winnipeg, Manitoba,

Native Concerns Director, MCC (Canada)

Response by John Janzen, Lawrence, Kansas

Stanley Friesen, James Bertsche, and David Shank agreed to serve as an "issues committee" which pulled together and identified some of the recurring themes and issues for the Friday morning session. Their report led to a significant final session and identification of continuing agenda. Following are points of their statement:

1. Though there has been one central theme ("A Christian Approach to . . ."), there has been great diversity of areas considered—the primal, pre-Christian covenantal, and post-Christian religions.

2. Each of these has its own mystery, appeal, growth patterns, etc. In each case the mystery relates to some extent to the aggressive nature of Christianity and the responses it elicited.

3. Western Christian credibility has been vitiated; our economic, political, and social privileges are also our handicaps.

4. This credibility problem alters but does not destroy our missionary stance.

There is a great deal of ambivalence in our stance and, therefore, division about our goals as missionaries. We frequently do not communicate the core of our faith clearly enough. Our stance should be one of sensitivity, calling people to the creation of a new community. We need to search for a new understanding of those to whom we go, e.g., the American Indian, and a deeper awareness that we need them as they need us. We need a new understanding of the Christ of the Scriptures versus the Christ of the missionaries (statement of a Native American: "I have no trouble with the Jesus of the Bible. It is the missionary Jesus I reject").

In relation to ourselves we need more explicit self-understanding, a greater willingness to become vulnerable. The mission to our sending context includes a dismantling of the power structures, i.e., of establishment Christianity of the West; helping our constituencies see our syncretistic Christianity, and becoming more sensitive to the missionary call in our own living context.

Theologically we need to work for greater openness and understanding through others of the depth meaning of our message. This means recognizing the difference between the creedal formulations of the sending churches and the effective message; many creedal formulations, which are often Constantinian, are inappropriate, or they belong, if at all, as the culminating expression of our mission rather than the initiating formula. We need a new understanding of what Christ and peoplehood mean; is the church not a melting pot? Is ethnocide sin? We need new attempts to see the state of Israel in theological and biblical perspective. We need to see the new community in Christ as a primary medium of witness.

Copies of the Kreider and Jeschke papers are available upon request. —C. J. Dyck

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*C. J. Dyck is director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies and professor of historical theology at Mennonite Biblical Seminary.*

## In review

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*What Next in Mission?* By Paul A. Hopkins. Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1977, 122 pp., \$3.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Howard J. Habegger**

For the person who is confused by all the changes that have taken place in Christian world mission, *What Next in Mission?* will be very helpful. Hopkins traces the political, economic, and social changes in the Third World, especially Africa, which directly affect our way of thinking and doing missions today.

The author deals at length with the issue of "moratorium" which emerged in the early 1970s from the African church. He comes down hard on Western mission agencies for not granting the emerging churches their independence and letting go of control. He makes a plea for mission supporters to have sympathetic understanding of the reasons behind the call for moratorium.

The issues of justice and affluence are major themes of the book. South Africa is a the primary target for the author's most biting language. There is no integrity in Christian missions which do not address the contemporary problems of justice and human rights. The prophetic message of the gospel must be heard and acted upon by the church in the context of mission.

In my judgment the book has two weaknesses. First, from beginning to end, the book is overlaid with a strong sense of guilt. Hopkins believes all the past and present faults and failures of world mission can be charged directly to missionaries and the policies of mission boards. Toward the end, the author says, "Throughout this book we have been seeing that the most guilty person is every one of us." While people can be sensitized to the issues, attempting to lay guilt on everybody for all the wrongs of the nineteenth century missionary enterprise is counterproductive.

Second, the title is somewhat misleading. It is not until the final chapter that Hopkins gives the reader some clues as to the "how" of renewal in Christian mission. The suggestions for renewal are general in nature and lack specificity. Hopkins sounds a note of hope for the future but without concrete handles or models on how to proceed with our mission to and from six continents. The title leads the reader to think the book is futuristic in outlook, but that is not the case.

The volume is an excellent primer for those who want to be updated and

sensitized to the changes in world mission since World War II. For those who read the book hoping for some new directions and concrete strategies for the future of Christian missions, it will prove somewhat disappointing. *What Next in Mission?* can best be used in small interaction groups who want to probe the past and present changes in Christian mission.

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*Howard J. Habegger is executive secretary for the General Conference Commission on Overseas Mission and former missionary to Colombia.*

*The Great Commission for Today.* By David M. Howard. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1976, 112 pp., \$1.95 (pb)

*Christian Mission in the Modern World.* By John R. W. Stott. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1975, \$2.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Hugo W. Jantz**

Decade upon decade we Western Christians smugly sent our missionaries to distant shores. A great deal of collective arrogance, with spiritual, cultural, and ecclesiastical dimensions, possessed us as we descended upon the poor, the deprived, and the pagan to bless them with the good news. All the truly good and God-pleasing missionary ministry that happened simultaneously cannot alter the other unfortunate reality.

It was to save and to restore the church's mission rather than to undermine it that Christian leaders, both in sending and receiving capacity, began to ask basic questions about the conduct of the church's mission.

What is mission, or is it missions? What is the good news? What about partnership and interdependence? What about the gospel in word and deed? Or, are the financiers of missions always, or even ever, the best decision makers, especially by themselves? More recently terms like syncretism, liberation theology, and contextualization have been used to bring problems of missions into focus for attempts at more realistic solution. The



above two volumes are helpful attempts to answer some of these questions.

David M. Howard, presently assistant to the president of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, has chosen a unique and yet simple approach in his book. In five chapters he develops a biblical study of the Great Commission as found in each of the Gospels and the book of Acts. He mentions several significant ideas in connection with Christ's command to bring the good news to every creature as recorded in the first five books of the New Testament.

First, Christ must have repeated the Great Commission a number of times at different places to different groupings of disciples.

Second, Christ gave the Great Commission in quite different ways, which reflect His intention, so it would seem, to emphasize various dimensions in a rounded theology of mission. Howard, quoting Johannes Blauw, makes the point that the Great Commission must not be isolated from the rest of the biblical witness.

Third, Howard explains each account of the Great Commission in context, showing in a helpful manner the connection to the Old Testament. He agrees with the Dutch missionary-theologian, J. H. Bavinck, that Genesis 1:1 is the necessary basis for the Great Commission. Says Howard, "That means that everything God created is within His sphere of interest. . . . Therefore, **all** the heavens and the earth and everything in the heavens and earth—including every man and woman that He ever created—concern Him."

Howard uses three basic elements in his book: Scripture; helpful supporting ideas from theologians like Karl Barth, J. H. Bavinck, Merrill C. Tenny, and Johannes Blauw; and finally, accounts from his personal experience and observation in missions and evangelism. The illustrations are complete enough to be brief stories and could even stand by themselves. Perhaps they take up too much space in some instances, to the exclusion of more biblical and theological material.

*The Great Commission For Today* helps us to get at the church's mission from inside the Bible, so that we can more easily throw off some of the useless and unnecessary baggage. I think Howard's treatment is especially helpful for the pastor and missions speaker. One should not look to this book for a theology of missions, but rather for a challenging presentation of the Great Commission in biblical perspective.

John R. W. Stott, Rector Emeritus of All Souls Church in London and widely-traveled Bible and missions teacher, writes from a firm biblical base and out of the best tradition of the Anglican Church in his book, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. His significant experience in the World Council of Churches as an articulate and unabashed evangelical adds power and credibility to his thoughts on evangelism, missions, salvation, and conversion, the main topics of discussion in the book.

This little volume reflects Stott's attempt to speak his mind on matters that could not be resolved in the midst of the wide theological and ecclesiastical spectrum of the World Council of Churches. Especially is Stott anxious to develop a biblical synthesis of the two extremes: the view of mission as consisting exclusively of evangelistic preaching vs. the view that evangelism ought to focus on positive social and political change. Stott quotes Dr. W. A. Visser t'Hooft to make his point: "A Christianity which has lost its vertical dimension has lost its salt and is not only insipid in itself, but useless for the world. But a Christianity which would use the vertical preoccupation as a means to escape from its responsibility for and in the common life of man is a denial of the incarnation, of God's love for the world manifested in Christ."

Stott is deeply concerned that, in undertaking its world mission, the church have a thoroughly biblical theology of evangelism. Like Howard he places great emphasis on the all-encompassing sovereignty of God. Evangelistic preaching derives its dynamic from faithful proclamation of the will of God Almighty as revealed in Christ. Stott is also greatly concerned that, in the face of extreme and unbiblical views, we learn honestly and effectively to dialogue toward the truth about evangelism within the biblical parameter.

Of particular significance in Stott's book is his encouragement to all Christians to dialogue with open mind, kind respect, and loving heart with all persons in the modern world—Hindus, Moslems, blue-collar workers, etc.—allowing the reality and authenticity of Christ's life in us to persuade the partner in dialogue.

Stott's chapter on salvation is helpful for the student of missiology who is looking for a brief statement on a theology of salvation that has to survive and even thrive in the modern context. What of physical/emotional healing, what of political liberation, what of the hermeneutical question, what

of self-denying service—as related to salvation in Jesus Christ? Says Stott, "Our message of salvation is bound to fall on deaf ears if we give no evidence of salvation in a changed life and lifestyle."

We are indebted to Stott for his straightforward treatment of conversion. It is clear that in discussing the subject, his mind is first of all on his own church. The message, however, applies to all who would be serious and faithful with regard to the church's mission. Only converted people can carry out the mission of the church. Stott relates conversion to regeneration, to repentance, to the church, to social responsibility, to culture, and to the Holy Spirit, and all in terms of a good practical theology.

As an Anabaptist reader, I missed discussion of believer's baptism and the believers church. Baptism is barely mentioned. But Stott's message is clear, and it is biblical. Also, it is set into the midst of life—the life of the church and of the world.

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*Hugo W. Jantz is a faculty member at Mennonite Brethren Bible College, chairman of MCC (Canada), and a former Mennonite Brethren missionary in Europe.*

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*A Concise History of the Christian World Mission.* By J. Herbert Kane. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978, 210 pp., \$4.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Hans Kasdorf**

J. Herbert Kane's books and articles range from the popular and promotional to the more sophisticated and scholarly in style and content. But they are always informative and inspirational. His historical works include a revision of Robert R. Glover's *Progress of World-Wide Missions* (1960), his own *Global View of Christian Missions* (1971), and now the book under review, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission*.

Though brief, this is without question Professor Kane's best mission history. Part one is written in a rather traditional fashion, offering a panoramic view of the

expansion of Christianity from 30-1850. The second part (chaps. 7-15), however, is fresh and provocative. Here the author not only presents facts; he analyzes and interprets the dynamics of history. What he says about the nineteenth-century forces of imperialism—political, economic, and cultural—represented by “the diplomat, the merchant, and the missionary” (p. 93) is an excellent evaluation of historical reality. The description of twentieth-century developments, the observations on “Missions to the Muslim World,” and the delineations of mission in Third World countries are equally valuable.

But there are also weaknesses. For example, Kane fails to mention the missionary vision and activity of sixteenth-century Anabaptists. Such omission could have been excused in the 1920s, hardly in the 1970s. Also, the fact that the author considers “Europe as a mission field” (p. 154), but fails to speak in similar terms about Anglo-America is unfortunate. America has no monopoly on sending missionaries from “here” to “there.” Christian mission is no longer a one-way street.

Nonetheless, anyone interested in a concise survey of world mission or in a companion to an introduction to missiology will find this book most helpful. “Facts and Figures,” important dates and events, a “Select Bibliography,” and an extensive index add to the usefulness of this *Concise History*.

The first step to understand Christian mission is to study its history.

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*Hans Kasdorf is professor of missions at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. He was a missionary in Brazil and Paraguay.*

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*What Are We Missing?* By C. Peter Wagner. Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, third printing, 1978, 196 pp., \$3.95 (pb)

#### Reviewed by Héctor G. Valencia

This well-documented book is a helpful analysis of the Pentecostal movement in Latin America. C. Peter Wagner, a well-

known North American missiologist with experience in that area, gives his observations and reflections about one of the most frequently asked questions: Why do Pentecostals grow while the mainline denominations as a whole either grow very slowly, remain stagnant, or even decline? Are there some lessons that non-Pentecostals can learn from the Pentecostals?

After a historical review of the main Pentecostal groups and an indication of their growth from 25 percent of the total Protestant population after World War II to 70 percent in the seventies, the author, who is not a Pentecostal himself, gives his attention to the lessons that non-Pentecostals might learn from them:

The Holy Spirit is the dynamic that sets the Pentecostals in motion. Doctrine, however, is not the only factor that makes them grow. Pentecostalism is rather a particular Christian lifestyle. “You can tell Pentecostals,” says the author, “more for what they do than for what they teach.”

Pentecostals are church-centered people, zealously evangelistic and responsible church members. Street meetings, visitations, and personal contacts all have the purpose of bringing new converts to Christ and incorporating them into the church from the beginning of their conversion. New converts are sought, found, brought, and nurtured within the fold. They are put to work immediately, their gifts used for the maintenance and multiplication of the church.

The Pentecostals concentrate on the conversion of the “proletariat,” although other social classes are attracted to the movement. They are not social activists but practice the concept of service.

Pentecostals are active church planters. By using the mother-daughter pattern, they multiply their congregations.

Pentecostal worship services are informal, indigenous, and varied. The elements in their liturgy meet the needs of the worshipers.

This thought-provoking book gives credibility to the often misunderstood Pentecostals. It shows what a committed Christian community, Pentecostal or non-Pentecostal, can do to propagate the faith. After reading it one has to ask the question posed in the title: What are we missing?

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*Héctor G. Valencia is the Latin America secretary for the General Conference Commission on Overseas Mission.*

*Theology in a New Key: Responding to Liberation Themes.* By Robert McAfee Brown. Philadelphia, Pa: Westminster Press, 1978, 212 pp., \$6.95 (pb)

#### Reviewed by Vernon Ratzlaff

Brown attempts to summarize major strands of liberation theology coming from Latin America, summarize reactions to them, and enunciate a posture for the North American church to take. Although the book suffers from an attempt to be cute in its chapter headings and subheadings, the body of the book rises above such contrivances.

Brown points out the interest by Latin American theologians in shifting from the question of development to that of liberation. (Is this why the otherwise excellent annotated bibliography makes no mention of Denis Goulet?) He does an excellent job of summarizing liberation theology (pp. 60ff.), especially in pointing out that the tools of liberation theology are those of the social sciences, not of philosophy as for classical theology. Devastating examples of the ideological captivity of the Bible are presented: the way in which we interpret texts in such a way as to retain our own favored position. For example, since “the God of the Bible is on the side of the poor, why are we undisturbed by the fact that we are among the nonpoor? Since the God of the Bible yearns for peace, why are we so untroubled by constant preparation for war?” (p. 81). We need to remove our “protective lenses.”

Brown also points out the continuity of liberation theology with church history: the early church as a persecuted minority, the radical wing of the Reformation, the social gospel movement, recent European theologians. To the critique that liberation theology espouses violence, he replies that the criticism is disproportionate to the amount of actual espousal and that such critique overlooks classical theology’s own “just war” theories.

Brown’s treatment is an excellent introduction of the Latin American liberation theology scene, with relevance more for the North American church’s attitude in dialogue than for its theology of mission.

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*Vernon Ratzlaff is executive secretary of Mennonite Central Committee (Canada). He was formerly professor of philosophy and religion at Mennonite Brethren Bible College.*

*Communicating Christ Cross-culturally.* By David J. Hesselgrave. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1978, 511 pp., \$9.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Jerry Hildebrand**

Using the ordinary communication model, Dr. Hesselgrave traces the missionary message from one culture where it is encoded to another where it is decoded. But in the process he sees it passing through a cultural grid of seven dimensions which may be regarded as the "cutting discs of a meat grinder; no message can travel **around** them but only **through** them." (Maybe that explains why some communication is just so much baloney!) All of these seven dimensions collectively influence and leave their contours on the message. And only to the extent that the source and the receiver have a common understanding of that grid can the message be understood as given.

The seven dimensions, each of which is carefully treated in a separate section of the book, are: the ways in which people perceive the world (worldviews), think (cognitive processes), express their ideas (linguistic forms), act (behavioral patterns), interact (social structures), channel their message (media influence), and make their decisions (motivational resources).

In the treatment of his subject matter, the director and professor of the School of World Mission and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, himself a missionary for a number of years in the Orient, demonstrates a unique awareness of and a sensitivity to cross-cultural requirements and the demands of missionary life and work. It is a scholarly work giving every evidence of not only fidelity to the Scriptures, but also of insights of science, history, and philosophy.

Except for possibly the section on worldviews, the book is readable and easy to understand, thanks to the 40 illustrations used throughout the volume. At the same time, however, the layperson would be well-advised to have a dictionary within easy reach.

*Communicating Christ Cross-culturally* tells what makes missionary outreach tick! It would make the ideal gift for the sincere but frustrated missionary, and might well serve to help one find the key to unlock the door of faith to the lost in a host culture. From its pages mission board members, administrators, and executives would gain a new awareness of and sensitivity to other peoples. Certainly, it would be unthinkable

that anyone preparing for a cross-cultural ministry today could ignore the knowledge it offers!

*Jerry Hildebrand is executive secretary of Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference and has missionary experience in the West Indies.*

*Everything You Need to Know for a Cassette Ministry.* By Viggo Sogaard. Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975, 221 pp., \$3.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Anne Ediger**

How can you carry out the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations in Third World countries where less than a third of the population is literate? Even for the fraction that is literate, the dearth of literature geared to their thought pattern and cultural context is generally limited.

How can a village preacher in the tropics cope when he is responsible for a circuit of a dozen or more churches in scattered, remote villages accessible only by tedious oxcart journey or crowded, rickety buses? How will the illiterate multitudes be taught persistently and systematically where no human teacher is available?

In his book, *All You Need to Know for a Cassette Ministry*, Viggo Sogaard, Danish missionary formerly with Voice of Peace in Thailand, shows how the cassette machine can solve the problem of the unreached, illiterate multitudes. The cassette has broken through the literacy barrier. It is small and sturdy enough, says Sogaard, to be taken from anywhere to everywhere—indoors and outdoors, in sun and rain, on cars, trains, cycles, and even on the back of a buffalo. It stands the rough treatment of being swung, shaken, and dropped (up to a limit). It can evangelize and teach new Christians to grow, to sing, to witness, and to teach others.

One of the fundamental principles of the learning process is repetition. Give to a person with some time and interest a simple cassette player and a series of programmed cassettes, says Sogaard, and the results in spiritual fruit will be

unbelievable in the most unlikely places and among the most primitive people. His examples from his experience are convincing.

Sogaard proceeds on the premise that a multi-media approach, together with interpersonal contacts, is the ideal strategy for world evangelism. Each medium has its own effectiveness range, as well as its limitations. Effectiveness in evangelism is based on media selection, says Sogaard. He accepts the fact that people are segmented on the spiritual continuum, and different media function effectively with specific segments.

The major section of the book deals with how to put a full cassette program into operation. Sogaard covers the setting of goals and objectives for the cassette ministry, target research, program production—types and standards, distribution networks, facilities, equipment, and training. He deals elaborately with the rationale for various types of programming, based on analysis of the environment where the cassette ministry is to function.

Sogaard's book is a comprehensive treatment, convincingly written and well documented. Media analysis, research methods, program production, equipment selection, operation, and maintenance are all treated in detail, the hardware as well as the software. Included even is a valuable bibliography of suggested readings. Anyone involved with the mass media will find this a valuable handbook that comes to grips with media function. Its practical approach makes it a MUST for those involved in the cassette ministry.

The strategy Sogaard propounds, however, presupposes an industrialized society. Lacking this, foreign subsidy and imported equipment in areas where price doubles with customs duty are the only alternatives. Costs run high for the total program. Indigenization might be an unattainable vision in the nonindustrialized countries where this type of ministry would make its greatest contribution. Having broken through the literacy barrier, Sogaard offers no solution to the financial barrier.

As a case history and a manual of operation, Sogaard's book is excellent. But his strategy is defeated by its prohibitive cost for the people it is meant to serve.

*Anne Ediger is secretary of communications of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, New Delhi. She is a veteran Mennonite Brethren missionary to India.*



# Editorial

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We speak with increasing ease about planet earth as a global village. In a world increasingly dominated by impersonal forces and in which the individual has been reduced to a number on a computer printout, the image of the village has strong appeal. We fantasize about the warm intimacy and feeling of at-homeness of the village where basic human virtues of love and fidelity, kindness and generosity, compassion and concern flourish. If perchance we cut through the romance about the village to reality, we will discover that the **interdependence** of the village consists in human weakness and sin combined with what is noble and admirable. It provides a useful starting point in any attempt to probe the meaning of interdependence, but we need to go farther.

Increasingly we affirm interdependence as the form of relationship which ought to characterize the body of Christ throughout the world. We reject relationships which produce dependence because human beings do not blossom and become all God intended them to be under such conditions. We reject relations which assert independence because they set up barriers between people. The alternative to both dependence and independence is to recognize our mutual dependence on one another in a relationship of give-and-take. Relationships which allow resources to flow in only one direction are based on important assumptions about power and who exercises control. They demean the one who is always the recipient and distorts the self-understanding of the one in control. Independence in relationship often springs up as a reaction to dependence. It represents an effort on the part of those who have been dependent to gain dignity and self-control by placing limits on the power of others over them.

Interdependence offers the possibility of a more mature and creative relationship, but it is also highly risky and demanding. It takes peoplehood—our common humanity—as starting point and rejects sinful barriers which alienate and destroy. It accepts the fatherhood of God as the banner under which we unite as we follow him. It calls us to a common task in the world. Interdependence arises out of a vision of the body of Christ as a community of gifts—each one given by the Spirit for the health of the whole in a way that each depends on the whole for effective working.

We must not, however, skip over the risks. We can romanticize the notion of interdependence just as easily as we do the village. The parts of the body do not always work together harmoniously. Some fail to pull their fair share of the load; others demand center stage for themselves. Each yields to the temptation to have a false

estimate of its own importance. Each sues for its autonomy from time to time.

One of the important debates in mission-church circles during the past decade concerned “moratorium.” This debate had to do with the question of how churches brought into being through missionary efforts could overcome the debilitating effects of a pattern which made them dependents of foreigners. Proponents of moratorium advocated a temporary halt to the flow of resources, i.e., power, from the West in order for these churches to develop their own means for meeting their responsibilities as members of the body of Christ in their society.

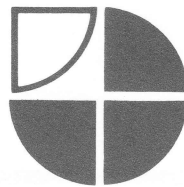
We do not intend to review what has been written about moratorium. We want to note only one observation. Leaders of churches involved in the debate observed that those missionaries and fraternal workers who had been most sensitive all along in their relationship to the church were the ones who packed their bags and left in response to the moratorium call. Those missionaries least sensitive to the issues—the ones who caused African and Asian church leaders to issue the challenge in the first place—were the ones who remained.

We have a long way to go in learning what it means to live and work interdependently. The problem is compounded by cultural differences and disparities in resources. We in the West continue to control a disproportionate share of the world’s power in economic and technological terms. This fact directly affects the conduct of Christian work.

One hears a growing chorus of criticism of para-church agencies engaged in mission and service work throughout the world because they operate autonomously. Lacking the traditional ties to local churches which have forced missions to live with the results of their labors, para-church agencies typically have arrived on the scene only recently, provide a specialized service, enjoy healthy financial resources, and need to answer to no local church. They hire local Christians away from their churches at salaries two or three times more than what the local church can pay its pastors. Such inequities inevitably create tensions and ill will. The local church feels frustrated because it has no means of speaking to the problem since the agency is accountable to no one locally. This pattern only repeats the old dependence-producing syndrome.

This illustration will suffice to make the point that we must continue to grapple with the issue of how genuine interdependence can emerge, allowing us to become a new kind of people.—Wilbert R. Shenk

# MISSION FOCUS



## The Contours of the Reformed Understanding of Christian Mission

JERALD D. GORT

Before proceeding to the central concern of this paper—an attempt to sketch the main lines of a Reformed apprehension of Christian mission—I want to formulate a broad definition of Christian mission itself, without qualifying terms, as a point of departure. The second section will deal with salient issues of Reformed theology which have an important bearing on mission. The third part represents an attempt to state the Reformed understanding of mission, or—less presumptuously—this Reformed writer's perception.

### **Mission: a general definition**

The simplest, most general definition of Christian mission that I can think of is: **the coming of God to people.** But it is doubtful whether this barest of statements speaks of Christian mission rather than of something that is virtually synonymous with the concept of "salvation." A definition of mission in history has to include the element of human as well as divine instrumentality, the facet of *missio hominis* as well as *missio Dei*.

**The coming of God to people through people** would perhaps do. But here, too, the definition does not go far enough to describe **Christian** mission. It is probably more suited for use as an expression defining the general revelatory activity of God in the world of humankind.

A phrasing such as: **The liberating coming of God in**

**Christ to people through his disciples** brings us nearer but not quite all the way to the goal of finding a proper definition. As it stands, this particular wording could be understood as including the pastoral care of the believing community, liturgical worship, etc. To avoid confusion we need a definition that distinguishes mission from pastorate.

**The liberating coming of God in Christ through his disciples to people who no longer know or have never known him:** this definition might serve as an acceptable general statement of Christian mission.

But the terms of such a highly condensed formula need to be spelled out in greater detail. Because one's specific theological legacy provides the colors and composition of such further elaboration, we must first attempt a brief

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articulation of the elements of Reformed thinking that bear directly on a Reformed understanding of mission.

### **Mission: a Reformed understanding**

As Fred H. Klooster recently pointed out in a cogent and helpful article, scholars have found it impossible to isolate any one central theme which could be said to integrate either all of Calvin's thought or Reformed theology as a whole (1979:32-54). If any golden thread runs through the Reformed tradition, he argues, it is not of a doctrinal nature but rather a basic, prior stance: "allegiance to the Scriptural principle," fidelity to the "whole of Scripture" (*tota Scriptura*) and "Scripture alone" (*sola Scriptura*) (1979:39).

Thus, instead of seeking one unifying theme, one ought to think in terms of several parallel, distinctive emphases of Reformed thought, all of which were developed within the framework of a conviction that Scripture is the only truly eye-opening source and final norm for faith and order and life and work.

A number of these distinctive emphases have played, and continue to play, a key role in shaping Reformed thinking in respect to the Christian missionary task. We must now direct our attention to them, but without losing sight of the fundamental commitment to this scriptural principle which—because it has exercised a formative influence on the Reformed attitude toward human history and culture—is **in and of itself** of singular import for the Reformed conception of mission.

#### **1. The knowledge of God and the knowledge of man**

Reformed theology begins with three questions: Who is God? Who is man (what is the world)? How are they related? The order of these questions is an indifferent matter, for an answer to one is impossible without an answer to the other. True knowledge of man is unattainable without knowledge of the living God. And, conversely, genuine knowledge of God is impossible without knowledge of man. In like manner, the answer to the question of the relationship between God and man (world) is simultaneously dependent upon and presupposed by the answers to the other two questions. Where can such answers be found? For Reformed theology the answers in their essence are revealed with special—unique and unsurpassable—authority in Scripture.

There we discover that God and man are related in and through Creation, Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Parousia. These are not isolated, discrete events occurring at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of time, but are profoundly interrelated turning points, connected historical moments of nonpareil decisiveness in

the ongoing, intense involvement of heaven with earth and earth with heaven. They teach us all we need to know about both God and man.

They teach us that man's relationship to God is one of

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desperate, life-and-death ambiguity and that, left to himself, man will perversely break the ambiguity in favor of death, choosing a life without God. They teach us of beatific acceptance of contingency exchanged for the slavery of Promethean arrogance, the liberation of obedience for the imprisonment of rebellion. They teach us of the salvific power of faith, hope, and love traded off for the chains of doubt, despair, and hatred; of the blessedness of trust turned in for the trap of suspicion; of the release of reconciliation for the bondage of guilt.

And this rejection of God by man is dreadfully reflected in the human condition. Each individual human life and the whole of collective human life is shot through with the evil consequences of the perversity of human choice.

But this is not the end of the story, for those same historical moments of world- and time-encompassing efficacy also teach us that things can be and will be radically different. The life-giving and liberating breath of the triune God, creating and recreating the world and humanity has not been extinguished. God's commitment to the work of his hands is unconditional, and his gracious saving activity in the world of human history is unending. God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit offers the unfailingly powerful means for transforming human life—both personal and communal—and all human relationships, for changing the human condition to one of peace, justice, righteousness, and love. This is the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, the gospel of the **messianic kingdom of God**.

## 2. *The gospel of the kingdom of God*

Reformed thinking has always made the kingdom central. In the New Testament the gospel of the kingdom is God's announcement of total human salvation through the reestablishment of his liberating rule in the earth. In the Reformed view this kingdom gospel applies directly to every single aspect of human life: religious, cultural, social, economic, and political. It applies to individuals but also to micro- and macrostructures created by man, to the inner but also the outer life of human beings.

It relieves not only spiritual but also physical burdens of men, women, and children. It brings forgiveness of sins, but also sanctification of life—restored relationship between God and man, between individuals, between people and the natural world, and between the sexes and generations, nations, and races.

Reformed theology does not permit a division of the world of human reality into two totally unrelated, irreconcilable realms of church and state, religion and politics, the spiritual and the material. Such a division, if followed consistently, leads to indifference toward and pessimism about human life. This construction perceives the world as the realm of darkness, doomed to pass away. Salvation is understood in purely spiritual terms. Only **part** of it is now available; it can be obtained wholly only in the next life. Therefore any "Christian" attempt to change the existing order is useless, even pernicious. The gospel only transforms individuals. At best these individuals may leaven society in incidental ways, but human effort cannot essentially alter human society.

In the Reformed view this interpretation is tantamount to a denial of biblical teaching regarding creation, man, and the saving work of Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven **and** earth. God has not abandoned his creation. It is true that on

Golgotha he uttered a terrible "No!"; but in the Incarnation and Resurrection and ultimately also in the Crucifixion he gave a resounding, life-giving "Yes!" Moreover, human beings are indivisibly **whole**; and the salvation of the gospel of the kingdom is likewise whole, pertaining here and now to the totality of human life and not only to part of it. Salvation obtains not only for people's "heavenly" souls but also for their "earthly" bodies. There is more to heaven than earth, but there is also more to earth than heaven.

Of course our salvation is not complete in this life. Though **whole** in its breadth and **total** in its range, it will be **fully** attained only at the consummation of history when Christ returns to usher in the new order of things in its replete richness. Thus, there will be no new miracles of salvation in heaven but instead the glorious **fulfillment** of that which Christ has already powerfully and wholly wrought for us in this life, the exciting completion in depth and degree of the kingdom, which in him is **nigh**, has **come**, is **at hand**. Paul did not write: "Now I know in part; then I shall know in whole," but rather: "Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully." Clearly, his frame of reference is a qualitative rather than a quantitative one.

## 3. *Gospel and law*

Closely connected with this kingdom emphasis—and thus also of importance for the understanding of mission—is the Reformed conception of the relationship of gospel and law. According to the lights of Reformed thought, a vital relationship exists between the two in both the old and new dispensation. The gospel has not superceded the law, destroyed it, or made it of no account.

However, the new covenant does represent a radical turning of the tables in this relationship. In the Messiah the law is fulfilled; its locus and function have been changed. The law is no longer written on stone, external to and hanging above people, something by which they live—impelled by the threat of the destruction of death—to save their lives. In Christ the law is written internally in the hearts of believers; they live by it—empowered by the gift of life—to complete the destruction of death. In the new covenant the gospel is not the progeny of law; rather law is the fruit of the gospel. Right living no longer creates salvation; rather salvation creates right living. Faith enables works, and works are the life-blood of faith. Liberation is the vehicle of law and law the motor of liberation.

Thus, though altered radically, the relationship between gospel and law remains in force for Reformed theology. In the Reformed position theology and ethics belong together; in fact, theology is ethics and ethics theology. Ethics without theology is at best a form of humanitarian messianism, which cannot be trusted because it does not trust the ultimate One. But the converse is equally noxious: Theology without ethics is essentially narcissistic and in the end misanthropic. No Reformed theologian could share Luther's musings on the desirability of removing the book of James from the canon.

The Reformed position understands ethics in terms of the **kingdom**. Without this kingdom emphasis, ethics can only take on the negative character of noninterference, can only be individual and microcosmic in nature, can only deal with personal righteousness or, at most, interpersonal relationships; social ethics are precluded. To the Reformed mind

Christian ethics are ethics of the messianic kingdom of God; they touch every aspect of human life.

#### 4. *Semper reformanda: theologia crucis, the scriptural principle*

A fourth distinctive theme is *semper reformanda*, the principle of continuous reformation. This theme has its roots in other key emphases of Reformed theology which require examination.

**Theology of the cross.** All Christian theology shares the conviction that the work of Jesus Christ is at the center of God's never-ending, saving activity on behalf of humanity. Less agreement exists, however, on the question of which elements of that work are at the center of salvation history. The theological choice on this matter profoundly affects one's perception of and attitude toward history and the world. Incarnational theology in its most consistent expression, for example, can lead to a cozy relationship with the established order and may engender a reactionary stance with respect to the status quo.

Reformed theology always strives to be a theology of the cross. In and through the crucified Lord, God says both "No!" and "Yes!" to the world. Both utterances from the crown of Golgotha are definitive and must, therefore, be taken in full seriousness. God's "Yes!" is in principle the final word, resting in Jesus Christ's victory once and for all over sin and death and in his establishment of the new creation. That is why the Reformed view cannot permit indifference or antagonism or pessimism to the world. If God is not indifferent, how can his disciples be? Is the servant greater than the master?

But the dreadful thunder of God's "No!" has not yet died away, for great blocks of human life remain in bondage to the forces of evil and the powers of darkness, and form a denial of the messianic kingdom. Reformed thinking must also take this into account in the assessment of the present world.

**The scriptural principle.** This has been described above. We need only add that the scriptural principle represents Reformed theology's prior commitment to the transcendent authority of God, the Creator and Savior. There is only one Lord, and all human thought and activity is measured by and must be conformed to his will, revealed in his Word. As the first thesis of the *Ten Conclusions of Bern* (1528) puts it: "The holy Christian Church, whose only head is Christ, is born of the Word of God, and abides in the same, and listens not to the voice of a stranger" (Klooster 1979:41).

**Semper reformanda.** As a consequence of these two emphases, Reformed thinking—at any rate in its more consistent manifestations—assumes a critical stance vis-à-vis the authorities, prescriptions, traditions, institutions, and ideological predilections of the existing world order, as well as all historical occurrences within its confines. Any of these that prove to be **merely** of the present order—incompatible with the constitution of the messianic kingdom—are subject to the principle of ongoing renewal and transformation.

This principle, which has played an important role in Reformed thinking from the beginning, was used not only in connection with the church (*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*), but also in terms of the whole of human society and culture (*semper societas reformanda*) (Verkuy 1973:2). The gospel demands the conversion and sanctification not only of individuals in their spiritual, daily

life, but also of the church and society. The evangel requires the renewal of political, economic, and cultural structures and institutions—not just any renewal, however, but one that can stand up to testing against the liberating promises of the gospel and law of God in Christ.

#### Theology: a Reformed perspective

What understanding of mission emerges from these distinctive concepts and key elements of Reformed theology?

I should like to argue for the adoption of the gospel of the messianic kingdom of God as the central, integrating theme, the cutting edge, the heart and perspective, the beginning and end of Christian mission. This kingdom perspective constrains us to view mission in the following manner.

The missionary task is as coherent, broad, and deep as the needs and exigencies of human life. The gospel of the kingdom is the gospel of the total liberation of men, women, and children from all bondages and enslavements in all times and places. As life is one and whole, so also is salvation one and whole. This cohesion and comprehensiveness of God's salvation and human need imply the cohesion and comprehensiveness of Christian mission. The interpretation of the missionary task in light of the kingdom allows no distinctions between spiritual and material, here and there, now and then, mission and evangelism.

Mission is in the deepest sense God's mission, not ours. It would be both foolish and pernicious to think that we could bring about the kingdom. The kingdom does not belong to us; it is Christ's. He instituted it, is realizing it, and will usher in its final manifestation in his own predestined time. **He** is the Liberator engaged in the transformation of the whole of creation.

His activity is not limited to the church but is oriented toward and centered on the whole world. Nor is he limited by the church's activity—or by the lack of it. He alone determines his coming and going: the Spirit listeth where it will. Thus, it is incumbent upon his people to be thoroughly open to the discovery of the operation of God's Holy Spirit in "strange" places, to follow him where he leads and to find him where he is. Mission belongs to God.

At the same time, however, he calls the people of the new covenant to carry out their part of the task, to participate in his salvific work, to become associates in his liberation campaign. "It is Christ's business to **effect** the transformation of society, but He enlists us to the watchful and prompt **pursuit** of that transformation" (Verkuy 1973:2). Thus mission, though belonging to God, is the business of the church. Mission is, in a derivative sense, also *missio ecclesiae*.

Being derived from the *missio Dei*, the church's mission must be carried out by the whole people of God, and then in a spirit of humility, cooperation, and mutuality. The missionary obligation does not inhere in personal inclinations or ecclesiastical position, but in the **constraint of the gospel of the new covenant**. It must therefore be carried out not only by certain groups or certain individuals, but by **all** of the parties to that covenant, wherever they live and work.

In like manner the church's obligation to mission inheres in Christ, its head, and therefore does not rest only on certain churches or denominations in certain lands, but

squarely on all churches everywhere. All churches share fully and equally the responsibility for the missionary task, and they must carry it out in complete, unquestioned mutuality. In fact, mutuality in mission is a cardinal aspect of our missionary obedience, for the great unfinished task laid upon us by Christ cannot be fulfilled without the combined resources of the full ecumenical church.

Making use of the insights, concerns, and emphases discussed above, we may now attempt a fuller statement of mission from the Reformed point of view.

### 1. *The Reformed formal definition of mission*

Formally speaking it is the use of the whole body of believers by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit as agents in his once-for-all yet ongoing, ever-constant yet ever-renewed liberating advent and epiphany to and among people everywhere who no longer know or have never known Him, until the feast of his final coming and appearing in fulgent glory. Put more briefly, Christian mission is the communication of the gospel of kingdom liberation by believers to those who have forgotten or have never heard it. But a formal definition of mission is inadequate; we must now go on to a more programmatic definition.

### 2. *Mission includes both word and deed*

The material content of the missionary task is correlated to human exigency and to the liberation accomplished and offered by God in Christ; the elements of one are exactly parallel to the elements of the others. For this reason, "communication" in the above definition must be understood to include both word and deed, both speech and action. Communication of the gospel in this sense leads to an understanding of the Christian missionary task which includes the following facets.

**Kerygma.** The deepest need of human beings is for liberation from the devastations of sin and guilt, the fears of mortality, and the deep anxiety of death. Mission's task is to proclaim the good news of forgiveness and absolution, of new life which begins now and continues beyond the grave with Christ in the new Jerusalem. In light of this most profound human exigency, we would be grossly inhuman and unpardonably treasonous if, as ambassadors of God's glorious kingdom of liberation, we failed to name the name of the King, if we neglected to urge men and women to accept and give allegiance to the Crucified and Risen One.

**Koinonia.** People also need to be set free from the chains of loneliness and alienation, from the purposelessness and meaninglessness of their lives. This also is a clear and pressing task for Christian mission. We must tell people that in Christ all walls of division have been broken down. We must invite them to the new communion and fellowship of those who have committed themselves to the King and the service of his kingdom, and who live in joyful anticipation of his and its final appearing.

**Diakonia.** The pressing individual physical and material wants of huge numbers of people must also be at the center of missionary concern. Jesus saw in the multitudes around him the sick and diseased, the blind and the halt, the poor and the needy, the dumb and the deaf, the hungry and the thirsty; and he looked with compassion on them, giving them bread, healing, liberation. Surely the bearers of the gospel of liberation may do no less in carrying out their missionary task.

**The struggle for justice.** Hundreds of millions of people in our day are enslaved within the stifling confines of unjust economic, social, political, and cultural structures. As we learn in no uncertain terms from the scriptural prophetic tradition, injustice and exploitation is a form of unrighteousness and sin that is particularly offensive to God. His wrath about this form of evil knows no bounds; injustice is the most profound perversion of his intent for his creation, the most banefully wicked denial of the designs of his kingdom. The gospel of that kingdom applies as directly to these macrostructural enslavements as it does to any other form of human bondage.

On that account, the search and struggle for liberation at this level also belongs directly and indissolubly to the Christian missionary task. We must witness to the demands and promises of Christ's kingdom before the rulers and governors of this age, at the seats of earthly power: in the palaces of kings and dictators; the headquarters of generals; in the chambers of legislators and judges; in the boardrooms of industry, commerce, and finance; in the halls of education and learning.

All four of these aspects belong directly and fully to the missionary task of the congregations of Jesus Christ. We cannot a priori answer the question of which comes first. Whether any of them should take precedence is a purely hermeneutical question; fixing priorities depends entirely on analysis and understanding of the context in which mission takes place.

Moreover, as Harvie Conn reminds us when he speaks of the "hermeneutical obligations of the gospel," this determination of the character of the missionary situation is a duty constrained on us by the gospel, for it wishes above all to be communicated (Conn 1977:90-120). And communication requires not only comprehension of the text, but also apprehension of the context.

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# The Faith Mission Tradition

EDWIN L. FRIZEN, JR.

The faith missionary movement was born out of concern of women to reach other women for Christ. It was the social systems of the East, primarily the *purduh*, the *zenana*, and the harem, that aroused Christian women of the West to carry the gospel where, without them, it could not be taken. Many women of Asia were inaccessible to a Christian witness by male missionaries. Missionary wives did what they could, but because of responsibilities for their own families, most had little time for ministry. The denominational boards would not send single women because of hazardous conditions. While on his way home to America from Asia in 1834, missionary David Abeel challenged the people of England concerning the condition of women in China and India. He brought the same appeal to America, urging that single women volunteer for service, and that women of the church should organize to support them.

The first interdenominational faith mission was organized in England in 1852 as the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission. The name was later changed to the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship (BMMF). It was the pioneer mission among women. In 1860 the first interdenominational board was organized in America—the Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East. A year later, the name was changed to the Woman's Union Missionary Society of America for Heathen Lands (WUMS). It merged with BMMF in 1976.

Faith or interdenominational missions are agencies that are not connected with, nor directed by, any ecclesiastical organization. Being independent, they have no denominational budgets to provide regular income.

One of the most significant developments in modern Christian missions has been the rapid growth of faith missions. Of the currently estimated 37,000 Protestant missionaries from North America, at least 60 percent are associated with these interdenominational missions. Several unique features and strengths have contributed to their growth and to the impact they have had on missions strategy and world evangelization.

## Uniqueness of faith missions

Although some of the distinctive features discussed here are not exclusively characteristic of faith missions, they have figured prominently in those agencies in particular.

### 1. Finance

Interdenominational, independent, or nondenominational missions have generally been called faith missions because their financial structures are based on trust in God

to supply financial needs through prayer. Through the years different interpretations of this faith principle have produced variations in financial practice.

James Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission—now the Overseas Missionary Fellowship—instituted many of the principles followed by faith missions. Dr. Taylor felt that it was quite possible to deflect interest and gifts from previously existing channels. Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor stated his position as follows: *Every effort on behalf of China and other heathen lands was more than needed, and he longed that the new work should, by the blessing of God, be helpful to all and a hindrance to none. But how to avoid trespassing, in this sense, on the preserves of others was a problem not easy of solution.*

*To cut at the root of the difficulty, he and Mr. Berger, his chief adviser, saw that the faith principles of the Mission must be carried to the point of making no appeals for money and not even taking a collection. If the Mission could be sustained by the faithful care of God in answer to prayer and prayer alone, without subscription lists or solicitation of any kind for funds, then it might grow up among the older societies without the danger of diverting gifts from their accustomed channels. It might even be helpful to other agencies by directing attention to the Great Worker, and affording a practical illustration of its underlying principle that God Himself, God alone, is sufficient for God's own work (1965:175).*

Most faith missions have adopted as their interpretation of the faith principle full information without solicitation.

Funds received have generally been administered by one of three plans: pooled support, modified pooled support (pooling only allowance income), and personalized support. Though there are published allowance rates, missionaries are not guaranteed a regular salary. Remittances are dependent on funds received.

### 2. To unreached people

Most faith missions were begun to take the gospel to unreached areas, often as a result of the vision of one person. In addition to the BMMF and WUMS, founded to reach the unreached women of the East, the names of other agencies indicate their purpose: to take the gospel to unreached people. Some examples are The China Inland Mission (1865), The Regions Beyond Missionary Union (1878), The Africa Inland Mission (1895), The Sudan Interior Mission (1898), and The Unevangelized Fields Mission (1931).

Since major denominational missions deployed their missionaries primarily to cities and coastal areas, these interdenominational missions purposed to reach the people and tribes of the interior.

### 3. Interdenominational

The early founders of faith missions were men and women who were agreed on the essentials of the Christian faith. The missions were made up of people from different denominations banded together on the basis of common evangelical faith and an agreed-upon practice.

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Today they are often called independent or nondenominational agencies because they are directed by self-perpetuating or mission-elected directors. They are interdenominational in that the missionaries, directors, and staff come from different denominations and churches. Although a mission is interdenominational in the church membership of its missionaries, it usually produces a denomination, or association of national churches, on the field.

#### 4. *Field-directed work*

In most faith missions the direction of the work in the field is done from the field, not by home directorates or councils.

#### 5. *Mission membership*

Missionaries are considered members of the mission rather than employees. In most cases the missionaries really are the mission. This means they have not only a voice, but also a vote in the organization and conduct of mission affairs. In some, the missionary members elect the general director and other chief executive officers. In others, the board of directors elects these officers.

#### 6. *Personnel*

Faith missions have traditionally drawn their personnel from Bible schools and Christian colleges more than from seminaries and universities. This is changing markedly. Usually, a minimum of 30 semester hours of Bible study is required, even for specialists with secular training.

#### 7. *Prominence of Women*

Throughout their history, faith missions have considered both husbands and wives as full missionaries, in contrast with denominational boards that have often appointed only the husbands. These missions also pioneered in extensive use of single women, even in interior evangelistic and church-planting ministries. Faith missions have more single women as missionaries than men. Although there are many qualified women, few are appointed to prominent leadership roles on the fields or at home.

#### 8. *Simplicity of lifestyle*

Most missionaries serving with faith missions have been characterized by a lifestyle more simple than those with most denominational agencies.

#### 9. *Cooperation*

Faith missions have been open for cooperation with other like-minded evangelical missions and churches. In 1917 the Interdenominational Foreign Mission of North America (IFMA) was founded, becoming the first association of missions and providing a framework for cooperation and unity among faith missions. In a number of instances this cooperation has led to missions mergers.

#### 10. *Innovation*

Faith missions have been innovative in their efforts to evangelize unreached, hidden people of the world, pioneering and specializing in such ministries as missionary radio and TV, gospel recording, Bible translation, and missionary aviation.

### Strengths of faith missions

Some of the unique features of faith missions have also been their strengths.

#### 1. *Dependence on prayer*

Because faith is the basic principle of these missions, prayer has been the dynamic of their maintenance, growth, and ministry. Personal and corporate prayer has continually been an integral part of the faith mission movement, involving both the missions' members and constituencies.

#### 2. *Recruitment*

The continual emphasis on the responsibility of all Christians to consider missionary service has been a strength of faith missions. Not being controlled by denominational regulations, there is more freedom and accessibility for the recruiting of candidates. The strong relationship between faith missions and interdenominational Bible institutes and colleges has facilitated recruitment. Strong recruitment efforts have greatly contributed to the growth of these missions.

#### 3. *Lay involvement*

Numerous people have become involved in missions by prayer support and financial participation as a result of the faith principle and personalized missionary giving.

#### 4. *Social aspects*

From the beginning of faith missions, there has been an integration of social concerns in ministry. Numerous medical and educational missionaries have always had a prominent place. Relief and community programs have not been neglected. However, the primary focus remains on evangelism and the development of the church.

#### 5. *Theological position*

Faith missions hold to the basic historical fundamentals of conservative evangelical Christianity, usually stated in detailed doctrinal positions which each missionary must agree to before acceptance for service. The majority of faith missions have a non-charismatic (not anti-charismatic) orientation.

In their firm adherence to the Word of God, they have avoided the great dangers of syncretism and neouniversalism prevalent today.

### Conclusion

While faith missions are not denominationally related in the homeland, they are church oriented and responsive to—and cooperative with—their constituencies. On the fields churches are established that evolve into denominations or associations of churches.

Not all interdenominational missions meet the standards set by the IFMA or other associations of missions. In this paper I have made generalizations based on the faith missions that do meet these requirements, and that represent the majority of interdenominational missionaries.

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# Lutheran Mission: Cross or Crusade?

WILLIAM J. DANKER

Cardinal Roberto Bellarmini (1542-1621) argued that the Protestants, especially the Lutherans, could not be the true church because, unlike the brilliant achievements of his own Jesuit order, they had no missions among non-Christians. Instead of special orders or societies, Martin Luther espoused the model of the "pebble thrown into the mill pond." As the concentric ever-widening ripples spread, so the natural gospel witness of Christian life and word should reach the remotest parts of the earth. Lay persons going abroad as merchants, officials, or soldiers should communicate the gospel in the course of their daily lives.

In practice, very little Lutheran mission work under any model took place among non-Christians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Exceptions are few. Gustavus I of Sweden (1523-60) sent missionaries to the Lapps in 1559. Swedish Lutheran colonists supported the efforts of Johann Campanius to reach the Delaware Indians (1643-48). He translated Luther's *Small Catechism* into their language in 1648, but it was not printed until 1696. Peter Heiling, lawyer from Lübeck, Germany, and disciple of Grotius, was in Ethiopia (1634-54) and is said to have translated the New Testament into Amharic, but this was an exercise in ecumenical relations rather than a missionary venture (Gensichen 1961:5-13, 16-23).

Lutherans were at a disadvantage in the post-Reformation era. Religious conflicts climaxing in the Thirty Years' War left little time or energy to respond to the mission challenge of faraway places with strange-sounding names. Moreover, the seafaring and colonial governments in control were Roman Catholic. Unfortunately, by the seventeenth century influential Lutherans were looking for "good reasons" to defend the real reasons for their inactivity. Systematicians like John Gerhard found one such "good reason" in a hoary misinterpretation of Matthew 28:19f; he maintained that the Great Commission was directed only to the first apostles. Others repeated a traditional literalistic misunderstanding of Romans 10:18, which argued that the gospel had already been preached by the apostles to all nations, that either the first hearers or their descendants had rejected it, and that therefore those people did not deserve to hear the message again. Justinian von Weltz went to Surinam (Dutch Guiana) in the later seventeenth century over the opposition of Lutheran theologians and church administrators. His appeal for Lutheran support went largely unheeded. He combined strong attachment to the Augsburg Confession with mystic and ascetic elements. After only two years in Surinam he died.

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Pietism gets the credit for converting many Lutherans to world mission. That often proved to be harder than converting the "heathen" to Christ. Frederick IV of Denmark, concerned about missions, could find manpower for India only through pietist leader A. H. Francke at Halle, Germany. Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau, Protestant mission pioneers, landed in Tranquebar in July 1706. William Carey went to Serampore in 1793, almost a century later. Pietism stimulated the rise of numerous mission societies. In the new world, Lutheran church bodies came to support missions directly. But the more "orthodox" they were in terms of seventeenth century biblical inerrancy, the less they did in world missions. E. L. Arndt, who organized the Evangelical Lutheran Mission for China in 1912, complained, "The Roman Catholics show the greatest zeal. Then come the Reformed sects. And then follow . . . the Lutherans. . . . Way at the end come those who have God's Word the purest and most abundantly" (Danker 1964:306). By the latter Arndt meant The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

## The crusade model: mission as human effort

But once Lutherans were dragged, kicking and screaming, into world mission, what model have they followed? The cross of Christ or a triumphal crusade? The little pebble or the big splash?

The military metaphor of ecclesiastical "campaigns," "crusades," and "conquests" for Christ comes as easily to Lutheran sloganeers as to any other Christians. Those with the militant approach are always tempted to believe in the rightness of their cause and the wrongness of those they confront.

"Right" conveys rights: ecclesiastical, political, and human. "Error" deprives one of them all. When the Jews disappointed Martin Luther's hopes that they would repent and believe the gospel, the aging reformer uttered imprecations and threats that are simply indefensible.

If Roman Catholics argued that they were the true church because their pope was the direct successor of Peter, Lutheran orthodoxy maintained that it was the true visible church because it possessed the "pure doctrine." The Augsburg Confession of 1530 was written to prove that believers in the gospel that Martin Luther preached had a right to remain in the Roman Catholic Church. It is ironic how soon they were denying fellowship to other Christians. "We're right and they're wrong" leads to pride and triumphalism in any church body, large or small. One follows a *theologia gloriae* rather than a *theologia crucis*. Ultimately one comes to glorify oneself instead of Christ. One fallible human will is equated with Christ's will. We preach God's Law, not in its severity, but in our own. The ego swells as one draws the sword and exclaims with Peter the Hermit, "Deus vult!"



The crusade mentality in mission is absolutist. How often the mission suffers from the tyranny of perfection! Those who espouse biblical literalism and legalism are hardly free from it. This spirit of perfectionism reared its head in the Chinese Term Controversy that centered already around Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). More than 300 years later, in 1924, missionaries of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and other Synodical Conference churches in China reopened the same pointless war that had pitted Jesuits, Dominicans, and Franciscans against one another. Ultimately, stateside brethren were asked in their sovereign ignorance to decide whether *Shang-ti* or *Shen* was the proper term for God. Crusading orthodoxy assumes the burden of infallibility that belongs to God alone. This *hubris* fails to recognize human limits and leads to tragedy.

In such an approach the mission inevitably plays second fiddle to "orthodoxy." The claims of the in-group take precedence over outreach, as the Apostle Paul found when he roused the ire of Jewish Christians by allowing uncircumcised Gentiles to receive baptism.

In the crusade stance, salvation of others tends in practice to be seen as dependent on our human effort. Whatever the written creeds may say, the Holy Spirit is in danger of being displaced by the arm of flesh as the prime mover and shaper of mission. I believe that Lutherans were right in emphasizing the gospel, baptism, and the Lord's Supper as the only means of salvation and forgiveness. But their sweeping condemnation of "enthusiasm"—theologians' shorthand for the opposite of the above doctrine—may have crowded the Holy Spirit into such a corner that even conservative Lutheran systematist Lorenz Wunderlich felt constrained to publish a book on *The Half-Known God*.

Crusades for the salvation of others tend also to concentrate on head counts and on souls. Numbers become the measure of God's blessing. Missionaries count their converts instead of weighing them. They preach a gospel to abstract souls instead of to whole people in a whole context.

The gospel witness becomes an extraordinary campaign instead of the natural, daily reflex of faith in the Crucified One.

### The model of the cross: suffering as witness

At their best, Lutherans, like other Christians, have abandoned the crusade and have fixed their eyes on the cross of Christ as both content and model of the mission. Come to think of it, at an ecumenical conference on "Emerging Models of Mission" some years ago, almost no one singled out the cross as our prime and obvious model.

Because the hoped-for Messiah had become to many an apotheosis of carnal pride and collective self-glorification, Jesus nearly always avoided the title. Instead he presented a far humbler calling card, saying that the "Son of Man" must suffer, be crucified, and die before he would rise again.

In the strange ways of God this sacrifice would take away all the sins of all the people, including their religious triumphalism and their proselyting imperialism. Lifted up on a criminal's cross, Christ would draw all people to him. His universal grace, his death in our place, his complete forgiveness would flood out in freedom to all the people.

Because suffering was inescapable for our Savior, it is an equally essential element in Christian mission. No one has understood this more clearly than Georg F. Vicedom, German Lutheran missiologist. After 17 years of missionary work in New Guinea and outstanding service as a university scholar in the theology and strategy of mission, he climaxed and concluded his book *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission* with a remarkable section on "The Church of Suffering" (1964:136-42).

Because Christ suffers with his disciples, the gospel message of Christians and their suffering becomes a *martyrion*, a witness to the truth.

Jesus never misrepresented the cost intrinsic to participation in his mission. One small sample: "Men will hand you over to their courts, they will flog you in the synagogues, and you will be brought before governors and kings, for my sake, to testify before them and the heathen" (Mt 10:17).

"The suffering of the church has greater witnessing power than the Word alone," Vicedom points out. "It becomes the witness in deed, a confirmation of the Word" (1964:138).

Evangelization on the way of the cross will address itself to more than souls, namely to the human being in his/her total psychophysical and social unity. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod reached its high water mark in world mission with the 1965 adoption of the *Mission Affirmations*, the individual titles of which reveal their content: "The Church Is God's Mission"; "The Church Is God's Mission to the Whole Church"; "The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Whole Society"; "The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Whole Man"; "The Whole Church Is Christ's Mission" (LCMS 1965:79-81, 113:23).

Such full-orbed evangelization is bound to lead to suffering both within the church and outside it. R. Pierce Beaver accurately foretold at his first reading of the *Mission Affirmations* that "these are dynamite." Together with progressive Bible interpretation methods at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, they helped provoke a right-wing political backlash that led (among other dire results) to the disbanding of the ablest mission staff the Missouri Synod has had since it first embarked on overseas mission in 1894. Ominous signs of a similar suffering loom in other church bodies, notably the Southern Baptist Convention as evidenced by its latest assembly at Houston, in June 1979. It is only the latest and largest example of Martin E. Marty's trenchant deduction that Christians today line up to do battle not **between**, but **within** denominations (1977:300). The crucifixions we endure for the sake of the gospel within our own homes, our own home congregations and denominations, and our own culture are at the same time the most exquisite agony and the most effective witness.

The Sixth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation which met in 1977 at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, said for the first time that apartheid is a *status confessionis* issue. This Latin term signifies simply: Apartheid is heresy; anyone who practices this sin is a heretic. Needless to say, this stand and the concomitant support of Africans taking part in the liberation movements have led to sharp conflict both among members of the LWF and vis-à-vis white supremacist political regimes.

Lutherans tend to be quietists, but some of us are learning the existential meaning of Christ's words, "I am

come not to send peace but a sword." It was hard for his disciples to accept the fact that they would not be wielding that sword in a crusade but feeling its edge under the cross.

Genuine mission results in our being included in this world among the victims in both church and society. Like Jesus and St. Paul, we will experience suffering primarily at the hands of our coreligionists. Our place among the victors in the world to come results from our participation through redemption in the cross-won victory of Jesus. Then we who in his mission travel the way of the cross share in the glory of our Lord (Vicedom 1964:142).

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## Mission: An Ecumenical Perspective

EMILIO CASTRO

The World Council of Churches and in particular its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) is a point of contact for the missiological reflection of the member churches. The World Council does not have an

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official doctrine, only a willingness to submit to the authority of the Scriptures and to look together for the obedience appropriate to each era and each place.

An ecumenical perspective, then, is not a description of the missiological understanding of each member church or all of the member churches. Without doubt, the different theological currents and different traditions exhibit diverse nuances in the comprehension of mission. However, in the permanent dialogue, in the permanent

search for reciprocal help, some emphases and some perspectives can correctly be called ecumenical perspectives.

### God is the starting point.

#### 1. *The mission is God's.*

The point of departure is the revelation of God in the biblical testimony and in the person of Jesus Christ. God is Creator, Redeemer, Liberator; God acts in history, assembles the nations, calls individuals, intervenes decisively in the person of Jesus Christ. This affirmation foresees two dangers: It guards against clericalism—shutting God up in the church and seeing ourselves as the center of his preoccupations—and at the same time impedes all relativism, all pessimism. The God we worship and want to serve incorporates all of creation, all of humanity, in his purpose.

The Father sent Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ then sent the church forth with the promise of the Holy Spirit. Mission incorporates us in the life of the Trinity! To participate in mission is to place ourselves in the movement of the love of God that seeks the redemption of all people, the recapitulation of all things in Jesus Christ.

*In reality evangelization, renewal and unity are intimately related as the common calling of all the churches. Evangelization is the test of our ecumenical vocation. The crisis we are going through today is not so much a crisis of faith as a crisis of faithfulness of the whole people of God to what he has offered us of his grace in the crucified and risen Lord and in what he demands in the wisdom and power of his Holy Spirit (P. Potter, *Evangelization in the Modern World*).*

### Jesus Christ is the model.

#### 2. *The mission of the church should be accomplished according to the model of Jesus Christ: "As the Father has sent me, so send I you."*

The Father sent him to be born in a manger, to live among people and share their problems and hopes. He made the fate of humanity his own and from within that situation pronounced the word of forgiveness and gave his life as a supreme act of liberation. The incarnation of Jesus reveals a missionary liberty that we should adopt as a working system; Jesus Christ is the invasion of the love of God in the world. Therefore his style of getting next to his fellow-creatures, what we call his priorities, varied in function with the situation of concrete need that he confronted. All of his life he pointed toward the love of God out of which he originated and toward which he calls people. He pronounced a word of pardon to one and a word of physical healing to another.

God's preoccupation is with the wholeness of individuals and of the total community. Our preoccupation with peace and reconciliation among the nations corresponds to God's mission revealed in Jesus Christ, just as our preaching of the gospel and calling people to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ does. It is important that our ministry for justice and the calling of our faith be related in such a way that they are seen as a part of the totality of love, of a missionary totality. Many of our discussions about the relative value of words or actions in supposed

vertical and horizontal relationships do not make sense when we compare them to the model of Jesus Christ. There, in the greatest vertical invasion in history, we have the greatest manifestation of horizontality!

*There is no single way to witness to Jesus Christ. The church has borne witness in different times and places in different ways. This is important. There are occasions when dynamic action in society is called for; there are others when a word must be spoken; others when the behaviour of Christians one to another is the telling witness. On still other occasions the simple presence of a worshipping community or man is witness. These different dimensions of witness to the one Lord are always a matter of concrete obedience. To take them in isolation from one another is to distort the Gospel. They are inextricably bound together, and together give the true dimension of evangelism. The important thing is that God's redeeming Word be proclaimed and heard (A Theological Reflection on Evangelism, WCC, 1959).*

### Mission has sense of epiphany.

#### 3. *Christian mission has a sense of epiphany, of revelation.*

Mission points toward Jesus Christ on the cross: "Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Every part of the church, all of its actions and all of its words, must point toward Jesus Christ. The mission that manifests itself in total methodological liberty implies a permanent call to conversion. Evangelization is that dimension of the Christian mission, present in all its forms, that gives people the opportunity to know the will of God. Everyone has the right to know the invitation that God gives them in Jesus Christ, to be converted as his disciples, and to be recruited for the cause of the kingdom. While the mission of God is manifested in history by many means that go beyond the church, it is the church's responsibility to call people to realize the manifestation of the forgiving love that is offered us in Jesus Christ and to realize his invitation to participate with him in the struggle for peace, for justice, and for love. Christians cannot keep the knowledge of Jesus Christ to themselves, because that is the best way to lose it. Only as we share with others do we know its depth. The Apostle Paul recognized that he was a debtor to all. The passion for evangelization is at the root of the ecumenical movement. The call to cross all barriers in the name of Jesus Christ constitutes a permanent and inevitable dimension of our Christian mission. We are called to cross the frontier of unbelief, of disobedience, ignorance, incomprehension, and even rejection. The love of God in Jesus Christ crosses the last frontier of the absence of God; it does not permit us to resign or abdicate our responsibility and privilege to share the gospel with every creature.

*The world is not only God's creation; it is also the arena of God's mission. Because God loved the whole world, the church cannot neglect any part of it—neither those who have heard the saving Name nor the vast majority who have not yet heard it. Our obedience to God and our solidarity with the human family demand that we obey Christ's command to proclaim and demonstrate God's love to every person, of every class and race, on every continent, in every culture, in every setting and historical context (Confessing Christ Today, Nairobi, WCC, 1975).*



## God prefers the forsaken.

### 4. *God has particular preference for the poor, the forsaken, and the deserted.*

In the biblical testimony it is evident that God is the protector of the orphans, the widows, the strangers. In Jesus Christ we see the love of God manifested in recovering the rights of the children, in words of forgiveness to the outcasts of society, and in defending the oppressed: "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom." We cannot comprehend the New Testament if we forget that it is a book written by the poor for the poor. The first mission of the Christian church arose out of a poor church and province and went toward provinces that were richer. The churches that are the fruit of the missionary work helped the mother church.

Faced by the dreadful problem of poverty, faced by the growing marginalization of millions and millions of people in the world, we Christians are called to place ourselves next to the poor to help them be protagonists in history. As Jesus Christ became poor for us, so we could participate in his riches; the church of Jesus Christ is called to assume the poverty of the world to share the abundant life which is the goal of the action of God in Jesus Christ. Contemporary mission has to help the churches in affluent countries to give themselves to the service of the struggle against poverty; it also needs to help poor churches remember that the poor of the world will only comprehend the proclamation of the good news when they receive it in its transforming fullness. Evangelization is the invitation to participation in a new life that transforms one's relationship with God, but also transforms interpersonal relationships.

*Material poverty in the sense of absolute poverty (living below the survival line) is seen in the Bible as a scandal and as diametrically opposed to God's manifest will. It is the result of sin and an insult to creation. Christ therefore took on man's condition, an action which Paul has characterized as voluntary impoverishment (2 Cor. 8:9). By the abasing of himself, by this kenosis (Phil. 2:6-11) Christ has, in love, taken on man's sinful condition and its consequences in order to redeem it, not to idealize it. Christian poverty has meaning only when it takes poverty on as an evil, to protest against it, and to struggle to abolish it (Commission for World Mission and Evangelism Preparatory Document for Melbourne, August 21, 1978).*

## Dialogue is the style.

### 5. *Dialogue is the style appropriate to mission in the model of Jesus Christ.*

Dialogue is an attitude of openness with our neighbors; it is testimony that acknowledges the right of our fellow

men and women to that testimony and acknowledges also the supreme, God-given liberty to accept or reject it. Dialogue is not a substitute for mission, it is an indispensable characteristic of it. Evangelization that is done without a spirit of dialogue corresponds to an imperialistic model, a crusade model which closes hearts and has brought so much tragedy in human history. In the accomplishment of our mission we cross all of the barriers that divide people, including the ideological and religious barriers, but we come near with the respect that belongs to every creature to whom God has conceded the gift of liberty and the creative capacity of culture.

*In giving our witness we recognize that in most circumstances today the spirit of dialogue is necessary. For this reason we don't see dialogue and the giving of witness as standing in any contradiction to one another. Indeed, as we enter dialogue with our commitment to Jesus Christ, time and again our relationship of dialogue gives opportunity for authentic witness. Thus, to the member churches of the WCC we feel able with integrity to commend the way of dialogue as one in which Jesus Christ can be confessed in the world today; at the same time we feel able with integrity to assure our partners in dialogue that we come not as manipulators but as genuine fellow-pilgrims, to speak with them of what we believe God to have done in Jesus Christ who has gone before us, but whom we seek to meet anew in dialogue (WCC Consultation on Dialogue in Community, Chiang Mai, April 1977).*

## The whole church participates in mission.

### 6. *The whole church is called to participate in mission.*

At the same time, mission requires a permanent search for unity, "that they all may be one so that the world will believe." Common testimony, reciprocal support, a unity transcending all our confessional divisions—this is the great ecumenical call to the Christian conscience. Look for unity in mission, search for unity for mission, remove the scandal of our divisions from the path to faith in Jesus Christ.

*Evangelism cannot be delegated to either gifted individuals or specialized agencies. It is entrusted to the "whole church," the body of Christ, in which the particular gifts and functions of all members are but expressions of the life of the whole body. This wholeness must take expression in every particular cultural, social and political context. Therefore, the evangelization of the world starts at the level of the congregation, in the local and ecumenical dimensions of its life: worship, sacrament, preaching, teaching and healing, fellowship and service, witnessing in life and in death (Confessing Christ Today, Nairobi, WCC, 1975).*

# A Roman Catholic Perspective on Mission

WILLIAM R. BURROWS

Roman Catholicism's Second Vatican Council returned the use of the term "mission" to the biblical understanding: an activity of God in which the church as a whole participates. Today the word seems to mean—as perhaps it should—any outreach ministry of the church. The theological depth of that ministry is rooted in human participation in the divine activity of renewal and reconciliation.

Still there are the problems associated with that particular mission of the church whereby it reaches out beyond the boundaries of Western culture. The basic interest of this article is to explore the resources which Catholicism may have to bring to bear on one central problem associated with this aspect of mission: finding a way to treat the issue of "other religions" and their truths in a theologically serious manner.

## Traditional Catholic missiology

I begin historically and with a rather odd twist. Catholic mission efforts and theory to this day derive their shape from the sixteenth through eighteenth century era of mission expansion. Those efforts are receiving increasingly sympathetic treatment at the hands of both Protestant and secular historians. Defending them, one might remember, used to be a lonely Catholic job and was carried out atop a barren mountain under heavy assault by shot and shell. That has certainly changed. What I will do in this article, however, will confuse the direction of fire: first, by pointing traditional Protestant artillery at a Catholic theological enclave (though I mean to write as a Roman Catholic); and second, by wheeling up a Catholic mortar to assault everyone.

And if I seem to have mixed up old allegiances, that is my intention! My basic contention is that the contemporary world mission situation renders most traditional bound-

daries beside the point.

At two important points Catholic ecclesiology influences missiological theory and practice. First, there is the conception of the relationship between the church and grace. As the modern missionary movement began its first phase in the sixteenth century, its motivating principle was the conviction that the grace of Christ came only through the sacraments of the church. Grace was conceived of as a "divine power" and hence somewhat reified. Catholics also owe Luther a debt of gratitude for helping the church come back to a consciousness that grace is primarily a beneficent attitude of God for sinners. But the important thing to realize in the context of this article is that the presupposition of the mission was the uniqueness of Christian grace—and the absolute importance of the institutional church for delivering it.

The second ecclesiological notion that influenced Catholic missiology is the conception of a one-to-one correspondence between the heavenly and the earthly (ecclesiastical!) kingdom. The earthly church was an image of a heavenly reality, and heaven was the realm of changelessness. In this Platonic worldview, a controversy like the one over Matteo Ricci's use of Chinese rites could not become a **theological** problem. The church, as an institutional whole, and its doctrines were viewed as participating in heavenly immutability. The only discussion possible was whether or not Oriental religious customs were adaptable to Christian religious purposes.

The upshot of these two principles is something like the following: A Christian concept of the absoluteness and uniqueness of the grace given by Christ, on the one hand, led to an inability to treat other religious Ways in a theologically serious manner. Christianity was the unique

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and universal Way of salvation. Christianity might be affected extrinsically, but never intrinsically by other Ways.

### Winds of change

As recently as 20 years ago an almost unanimous consensus existed among Roman Catholics that foreign missions were an important work and that the goal of the mission was universal conversion of all races and peoples. What winds of change blew away that idea? I find the life and thought of Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) instructive; in many ways Troeltsch's personal anguish over the question of the absoluteness of Christianity, as well as the position he came to take on the issue, seem to have been an anticipation of the attitude which would become general among Catholics by the last quarter of this century.

In 1901 Troeltsch had formulated a position on the relation of Christianity to other religions and to the problem of pure historical relativity. It was a position which he found troubling and which he tried to refine and perfect in order to make clear, first, that a consciousness of religious plurality and relativity did not have to mean a denial of the truth of religion and, second, what was required was a philosophy of religion which could articulate the underlying dynamic of all religious forms. Such was his program. More concretely, what does Troeltsch have to say to our own age? How does he anticipate the attitude taken by many Catholics today?

First, Troeltsch believed that Christianity could be shown to be superior to Western culture—and perhaps also, because of its belief in God's concern for the individual, relatively superior to other religions. Second, every authentic religious tradition was a divine revelation leading humans to their transcendent end. Third, since each religious tradition was historically conditioned, the best doctrine could do—for any tradition—was to articulate **for a given moment** the divine presence and demand and graciousness. Fourth, while Christians had a responsibility for aiding and sharing their faith with "primitive races" (1923!), one was not justified in thinking it probable or necessary that Christians work to convert adherents of "higher religions."

My hypothesis is that something like Troeltsch's attitude has seeped into the consciousness of Christians who have allowed themselves to be touched by modernity. The more orthodox may judge such an attitude to be a giving up of essential Christian faith. The more liberal may recognize themselves in this picture but prefer bifurcation to thinking through and sorting out the implications of such a relativizing conception of Christianity in the midst of other Ways. Troeltsch, along with many other "modern" Christians, holds that **no** revelation is absolute for all time. It may be the best one has for a given moment, but our world is incurably temporal; time marches on and we need continually to reformulate even the most cherished doctrines. Thus "absoluteness" is qualified by historical relativity and obtains only that sort of finality which is proper to a historical universe. Even God's **total** self-revelation is subject to this law because even he (in Troeltsch's and the "process" view) is temporally related to the universe.

I take it that the consciousness of religious relativism is one of the major factors affecting the church's confidence that it has a unique mission from God and for all mankind.

In 1913 Troeltsch said that "Missionary enterprise is well enough cared for through the conservative ideals of the great masses of Christians." The demise of such "conservative ideals," where it has occurred, constitutes a major question regarding the mission of the church. Does the church have a mission? We cannot, of course, answer that global question. What I would like to do is show how one aspect of Catholicism's heritage—when reinterpreted for the mission situation—may be a resource for allowing the church to face the entire problem of other Ways honestly.

### Reformulating the notion of "tradition"

There are, it seems to me, two major options for dealing with the relativity crisis posed by Christianity and other religious Ways: (1) asserting the absoluteness of Christianity in much the same way it has been asserted in the past several hundred years; or (2) finding some basis or point of view from which to allow other religious Ways to affect intrinsically the shape and self-understanding of Christianity. If one holds for the first, then politeness towards other Ways is the manner in which ecumenism will be carried on, though deep down conversion to Christianity is still the objective. I would like to play with the second option with full awareness that there is danger that the real essence of Christianity may be eroded.

John B. Cobb, Jr., has noted that in the present global situation, all humanity is faced with a problem of biological and personal, humane survival. His book, *Christ in a Pluralistic Age*, addresses just this situation: *The question the Christian hears in this situation is whether there is a Way through the chaos of our time so that we can be brought together with others rather than try to run roughshod over them. This book proposes that for us Christ is the Way that excludes no Way.*

The problem with Cobb's Troeltschian formulation of the contemporary religious dilemma is that it challenges directly the Platonic scheme whereby Bible and doctrine participate in the immutable, heavenly realm. Allowing other Ways to affect Christianity intrinsically would admit historical temporality into the bosom of Christian doctrine.

Catholicism may have an advantage over orthodox Protestantism in facing up to the question of introducing "new" elements into Christian self-understanding. Protestantism has traditionally had a one-source theory of Christian revelation and truth. Catholicism has tried to move closer to the Protestant understanding in the Vatican II decree on revelation, *Dei Verbum*. My argument is, however, that the older Catholic doctrine of two sources (Scripture **and** tradition!) may be a more helpful resource than the notion that Scripture alone will solve the problem of self-identity in new situations.

Tradition is a twofold reality: a *traditum* (what is handed on) and an *actus tradendi* (the act of handing on). Tradition is utilized in the life of the church to reinterpret and apply the gospel for new situations. Now the understanding of tradition in this sense is that a living authority (the magisterium) helps the community pose new questions. We must admit that the radicality of the contemporary mission situation far exceeds anything the church has been faced with since the early patristic period (when Hebrew thought had to come to terms with Hellenistic thought). The main lines of the issue, however, are not completely unfamiliar.



The mindset of many modern Christians may be taken as the *sensus fidelium*, the "consensus of the faithful." Looking at the Christian tradition, it may be possible to state that the present moment is one in which a changed appreciation of the relativity of our formulation of the meaning and the implications of revelation requires an openness to other religious Ways. Tradition as *traditum* might reveal that the essence of Christianity lies in the conviction that Jesus reveals God's reconciling and renewing favor towards humankind, and that this insight needs now to be reformulated in the light of the contact with other Ways. Tradition as an *actus tradendi* would be the entire process of dialogue with Christians and people of other faiths in order to puzzle out together the Way we must tread together. Relativized would be much that is part of Western cultural and religious history (likewise, much that is merely Oriental or African or Oceanic cultural and religious history!). Still absolute would be the mysterious and hidden One who has revealed his gracious purposes.

To return to my earlier analogy, using Catholic mortars, I am directing my fire all over the place. But that is what I set out to do. The real mission of the church is participation in God's renewing and reconciling activity. Somehow I think the challenge of the day is formulating and expressing that faith in a manner that will cross over outmoded boundary markers.

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## Chronicle

### Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission Consultation

April 20-23, 1979, Lawton, Michigan

Focus: A SELF-STUDY FOR MISSION IN THE 1980s

Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission board members, furloughing missionaries, representatives of the women's auxiliary, and invited resource persons met at Miracle Camp, Lawton, Michigan, April 20-23, 1979, to evaluate past and present involvement of AIMM and to redefine and restate AIMM stance, objectives, and strategies for the decade ahead.

The location of the AIMM consultation was an appropriate symbol, for it reminded participants that the existence of this joint mission, which has grown out of the common faith of various groups of Mennonites, is in itself a miracle of our Lord. The theme of the consultation, "We preach Jesus Christ our Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor 4:5), reminded us of our basic purpose and caused us to submit everything to his guidance, his wisdom, and his sovereign purpose.

Five papers on major aspects of AIMM programs were presented and discussed in plenary session. These five topics were worked through in smaller groups:

#### AIMM—Its View of Christian Mission

by Allan Wiebe

#### AIMM, South Africa, and Apartheid

by James Juhnke

#### AIMM and the Spiritual Churches

by Stanley Nussbaum

#### AIMM and the Autonomous Mennonite Churches in Zaire

by Ben Eidse

#### AIMM—an Inter-Mennonite Mission Organization

by Elmer Neufeld

James Bertsche presented a kickoff paper, **AIMM and the 1980s**. Copies of all six papers, a 53-page self-study summary, and the nine-page findings statement approved by the consultation are available to **Mission Focus** readers on request from AIMM, 224 West High Street, Elkhart, IN 46514.—James E. Bertsche

*James E. Bertsche, earlier a missionary in Zaire, is now the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission executive secretary.*

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**Commission on Overseas Mission Seminar**  
**June 11-20, 1979, Winnipeg, Manitoba**  
**Theme: PARTNERS IN MISSION**

Forty-five persons participated in the annual summer seminar of the Commission on Overseas Mission, General Conference Mennonite Church, Newton, Kansas. It was held on the campus of Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 11-20, 1979.

Participants included 15 furloughing missionaries on North American assignment, 10 new appointees, 10 missionary children, and 10 resource, staff, and commission persons. Missionaries came from Japan, Mexico, Bolivia, Lesotho, Zaire, and Taiwan. New workers are headed for Bolivia, Brazil, Taiwan, Botswana, and Colombia.

Erland Waltner, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries New Testament teacher, led five 90-minute studies surveying Acts 1-15 in relation to the theme of partnership. Other presentations during the seminar included:

**Transcultural Adjustment**  
**Cultural Links/Barriers in Communicating the Gospel**  
**The Missionary as a Marginal Person**  
by Roelf Kuitse, Elkhart, Indiana (Netherlands),  
Director of the Overseas Mission Training Center

**Managing Our Time**  
**Interpersonal Relations**  
by Elmer Ediger, Newton, Kansas,  
Director of Prairie View Mental Health Center

**Physical and Emotional Health of Missionaries**  
by Carl and Hilda Epp

**Communication with North American Churches**  
by Larry Kehler, Winnipeg, Manitoba,  
Pastor of the Charleswood Mennonite Church

Staff led other sessions on other themes: "Poverty and Development," "Missionary Evaluations," "Itineration," and "Preparation and Use of Audiovisuals." Three of the evenings were devoted to brief sharing and prayer for concerns the church is facing in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Nearly all of the missionaries and new appointees preached missionary sermons on June 17. The final evening was a time of worship and communion led by Edward Enns and J. K. Klassen. —John Sommer

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*John Sommer is overseas personnel secretary for the General Conference Mennonite Commission on Overseas Mission, Newton, Kansas.*

**Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities**  
**Overseas Orientation**  
**June 24-30, 1979, Halifax, Pennsylvania**  
**Theme: THE GOSPELS AND CHRISTIAN MISSION**

Twenty-eight newly appointed and 14 furloughed missionaries met for Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities overseas orientation June 24-30, 1979, at Camp Hebron near Halifax, Pennsylvania. The missionaries serve in 10 different countries: Honduras, Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Philippines, Guatemala, Swaziland, Belize, Yugoslavia, and Brazil.

The purpose of the orientation as outlined by Eastern Board's overseas office was to develop an awareness of the Scriptures as a resource to transcultural relationships and to clarify the Board's theology of mission and perception of the church's role in society.

Other objectives for the orientation were to increase awareness of world mission issues, especially understandings in relating to overseas Mennonite churches; to develop a sympathetic awareness of other cultures, religions, and value systems; to develop a deepening self-awareness, including personal motives and expectations; and to provide an opportunity for fellowship and sharing.

Resource persons for the orientation were Willard Swartley, associate professor of New Testament at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana; and Calvin Shenk, assistant professor of church studies at Eastern Mennonite College, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Swartley led daily meditations and gave a series of six lectures on the theme: **The Gospels and Christian Mission**. Calvin Shenk presented six lectures on the theme: **Faith, Culture, and Religion**.

Other topics led by participants were "The Goal of Mission," "The Missionary in Conflict Situations," "Missionary Communication with Constituency," "Witness as 'Development,'" "The Role of Women in Mission," "Witness to Muslims," "The Place of the Family in Mission," "Witness to Marxists," and "The Place of the Single Person in Mission." —Miriam F. Book

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*Miriam F. Book works in the overseas office at Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, Salunga, Pennsylvania.*

**Mennonite Board of Missions Overseas Seminar**  
**June 23-29, 1979, Washington, D.C.**  
**Theme: MISSION AND METROPOLIS**

Forty-four people participated in the annual Mennonite Board of Missions Overseas Missions Seminar at the

Church of the Pilgrims, Washington, D.C., June 23-29, 1979. The group included 19 missionaries on furlough, 10 new appointees, and 15 staff and resource people. One couple present was sponsored by Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities; Franconia Mennonite Conference Missions Commission sent another couple. Missionaries attending the seminar represented work in Belgium, Brazil, England, France, Ghana, Japan, Mexico, Paraguay, and Puerto Rico. New workers will go to Bolivia, Ireland, Italy, and Nigeria.

George R. Brunk, III, dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Virginia, led daily studies on the city in Luke/Acts. Other sessions focusing on the theme of **Mission and Metropolis** included:

#### **City, History, Mission Strategy**

##### **The Secular City**

##### **The City and Religion**

##### **Mission and Metropolis (A.D. 2000)**

by Wilbert R. Shenk, secretary for overseas missions, Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, Indiana; and Roelf S. Kuitse, director of the Overseas Mission Training Center, Elkhart, Indiana

#### **The Church in the City: Two Decades Later**

by Paul Peachey, sociology professor, Catholic University, Washington, D.C.

Delton Franz, Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section, Washington Office, organized a day of lectures and discussion on Capitol Hill.

Staff also led sessions dealing with administrative procedures and communicating with the home church. Evening meetings surveyed Mennonite Church mission efforts continent by continent.—Barbara Nelson

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*Barbara Nelson works in the overseas missions office of Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, Indiana.*

#### **Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services Church Mission Institute and Worker Retreat July 2 to August 4, 1979**

The Church Mission Institute, sponsored by the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services and Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California, was held July 2-27, 1979, at the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. The Church Mission Institute is designed to prepare missionary candidates for overseas and domestic assignments and to provide a renewal experience for missionaries on furlough. Workers have a choice of auditing or taking courses for credit.

Institute courses dealt with the following themes:

#### **The Bible for Faith and Discipleship**

by Leslie Mark (first week), missionary in Mexico, presently developing a Hispanic ministry training program at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary; and (fourth week) by Elmo Warkentin, director of Church Growth Seminars and Demographic Surveys, Mennonite Brethren Church, and Wilmer Thiessen, secretary of resources, Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions/Services, Hillsboro, Kansas

#### **The Church and its Mission**

by G. W. Peters, recently teaching in Bad Liebenzell, Germany, and Trinity Evangelical Theological Seminary, Deerfield, Illinois

#### **The World and its People in Missiological Perspective**

by Paul Hiebert, professor of anthropology, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California

#### **The Missionary in Life and Service**

by Jack Patton, medical director of Nazarene Hospital, Papua New Guinea; and Stanley Lindquist, professor of psychology, California State University, Fresno, California

#### **Relevant Missiological Issues: the World and its People**

by Hans Kasdorf, Church Mission Institute director and associate professor of world mission at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary

The Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services Worker Retreat followed the Church Mission Institute July 29 to August 4, 1979, at Deer Creek Christian Camp, Bailey, Colorado.

Objectives for the retreat were to enhance a personal relationship with Christ, to foster a motivation that recognizes the spiritual and physical aspects of serving people, to improve an understanding and appreciation of people, to create an adaptable service disposition to working with others, and to gain a knowledge of serving through Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services.

Resource persons held a series of major sessions throughout the week:

#### **Missions—Trans-Cultural Communication**

by Paul Hiebert, professor of anthropology, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California

#### **The Missionary—Human, Humble, Harassed, Happy**

by Cliff Ratzlaff, psychologist

Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services staff persons organized other activities during the worker retreat.—Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services



## In review

*Apostles to the City.* By Roger S. Greenway. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978, 96 pp., \$3.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by John J. Klassen**

Through both experience abroad as a missionary and long studies in the field, the author is eminently qualified to write about urban missions. But though he provides some specific examples to illustrate the concepts he presents, Greenway has not attempted to write a manual for city missionaries. Rather, he has selected several cases from both Testaments to illustrate the principles he expounds.

Greenway recognizes that Christianity has not prospered in modern cities and that Protestantism in particular has found the metropolis an unfavorable environment in which to grow. Nevertheless he does not despair. Using Jonah as an example, he asserts that God still provides hope for doomed cities. Then he proceeds with studies of Jeremiah and Nehemiah: One instructed his readers to pray for the peace of the city where they were captives, and the other worked dynamically for urban renewal. In the New Testament, Paul provides the message and method for the city.

The author believes that only a holistic approach to urban mission can satisfy both the biblical injunctions and the needs of the city. Thus he provides specific recommendations for restoring the *shalom*, such as working for open housing or adult literacy programs. But he recognizes that the root of the problem is sin. For that reason he repeatedly emphasizes that the renewal and reform of the city wait for the renewal of human hearts through regeneration.

Because the world is rapidly becoming urbanized, we cannot ignore the cities. Instead, in faithfulness to our Lord, we are obligated to take the message of reconciliation to the place where people live, and there to proclaim it in terms they can understand. That may involve us in confrontation with politics or Marxist philosophy, but we dare not ignore our commission. As representatives of our Savior, Greenway affirms, we must first proclaim unequivocally that Jesus is the Lord who converts sinners. But we must also proceed with the organization of visible churches and strive to permeate society with the leaven of justice.

This brief book, originally given as

lectures at Reformed Bible College, can disturb or help. If we are inclined to flee from the turmoil of the city, it may disturb us as it calls us to our task; but if we want to be God's agents of change at those points where sin and strife and agony are concentrated, it can orient us for the task of reconciliation.

I commend Roger Greenway for his ability to discern biblical principles and for his capacity to express himself clearly. We should proceed with the easy task of reading his short book and the hard task of applying its insights.

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*John K. Klassen is a veteran church planter in Brazil.*

*The Christian Message in the Non-Christian World.* By Hendrik Kraemer, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1977, 455 pp., \$9.95

**Reviewed by Peter Fast**

This book, written by one who enjoyed a long and illustrious career as a missionary statesman and strategist (Hendrik Kraemer, 1888-1965) went through an eighth printing in 1977, basically unchanged since 1938 when it was first published.

The missionary world was then in the decade following the second World Missionary Conference held in Jerusalem in 1928. Kraemer wrote the book on request of the International Missionary Council in preparation for the third World Missionary Conference held in Tambaram, Madras, India, a decade later. It profoundly influenced thinking about the nature of missionary enterprise.

That it needed to be reprinted in 1977 attests to its strength and vigor and to its continuing challenge to the contemporary church in its endeavor to define itself in relation to people of other faiths.

Kraemer wrote this book in response to the crises of relativism and secularism engulfing the Western world, of Western penetration of the East, and of the church's inability to distinguish clearly between the divine order and the empirical order.

These revolutionary changes in the world, together with liberal views on the relation of Christianity to the non-Christian religions, provided sufficient reason for

Kraemer to undertake a grand missiological reorientation.

Kraemer's thinking also underwent a change. Early in his life he believed the Eastern world, with its culture and religion, was on the verge of disintegration. This would create the vacuum needed for the East to emerge on a Christian base. In the early 1920s he questioned such disintegration. He saw the nations of the East emerge with a strong sense of national religion. With prophetic courage Kraemer not only promoted such a sense of national identity, but also pleaded for the development of an autonomous, indigenous church. These developments have since been increasingly realized and taken for granted. But at the same time, they made the task of missionary reorientation all the more urgent.

The greater part of the book is devoted to an analysis of the Christian message and an extended treatment of the nature of non-Christian religions. Underlying the major thesis is the assumption that each religion is a total "apprehension of reality"—system and theory of life inclusive of culture, civilization, structure of state and society—and not merely a set of speculative ideas (pp. 102, 146). Christianity is no exception. By means of this assumption Kraemer points out the discontinuous and exclusive nature of each different apprehension of reality.

Fundamentally, however, there is not a plurality of religions but only a duality, determined by the response which a person makes to God in religion. Kraemer sees a radical difference between the response of the person to God in the non-Christian religions and the response elicited in Christian faith. The former illustrates the individual in revolt against God. The latter illustrates the individual in surrender to God. Non-Christian religions are basically human apprehensions and therefore misdirected expressions of religious life (p. 137). Throughout the book Kraemer points out the "distressing and desperate" (p. 136) character reflected in the various religions.

Over against these many human efforts to apprehend the totality of existence stands the Christian revelation, a biblical realism. It is not a theological or philosophical system. It simply "tells a tale about God" (p. 168), a "record of God's self-disclosing and recreating revelation in Jesus Christ" (p. 113).

The implications of such a view for

missionary theory and practice are clear. Although Kraemer was well acquainted with non-Christian systems of belief, especially Islam, and although he took a sympathetic attitude towards them, in the final analysis his approach to the Christian mission, vis-à-vis people of other faiths, is one of confrontation, conflict, and revolutionary contrast (p. 308ff.).

Kraemer argues his case with erudition. The case has in the meantime received strong theological undergirding from Barthian dogmatics. Kraemer's thesis has, nevertheless, failed to capture the field and has remained open to question.

In his attempt to save Christianity from the crisis of syncretism and relativism, Kraemer has absolutized the Christian faith. He has failed to take seriously enough the fact that Christianity is open to change and capable of adaptation. Kraemer has ultimately made the Christian faith exclusive and brittle, less flexible than the witness of its Scripture and history would allow.

That such an approach would lead to heated debate in the 1930s is obvious, given the then-widespread view in the West that Christianity was in some way the continuous, evolutionary fulfillment of the religious strivings of humanity. The debate in our time has not lessened in intensity or relevance. The opposite is the case because of the postcolonial era in which the church is now challenged to do its mission.

In the meantime, however, the focus of the debate has shifted geographically and theologically. In the 1930s the voices engaging in the controversy were predominantly Western, with a religious orientation which has been Christian for centuries and whose civilization has been shaped by the Christian tradition.

The voices we now hear, and which are increasingly vocal and erudite, are those of the non-Western world. Their backgrounds are shaped by traditions other than the Christian one. In this context the shape of Christianity for the East will need to be drawn.

The debate, of necessity, will continue both in the East and in the West as long as Christianity engages in the affairs of humanity and makes history.

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*Peter Fast, a professor at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba, has had missionary experience in Indonesia.*

*The Contagious Congregation.* By George G. Hunter. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979, 160 pp., \$4.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Henry J. Schmidt**

For Christians and churches committed to the Great Commission but who tend to get locked into "evangelistic clichés" and sterile methodology, *The Contagious Congregation* is refreshing. Although Hunter's work is another of the many books on church growth currently flooding the market, it deserves a second look. It will be a biblical, unique, insightful, and practical tool for evangelism strategists in the coming years. Hunter's experience as a pastor and evangelism professor at Perkins School of Theology, as well as his current assignment as Secretary of Evangelism for the United Methodist Board of Discipleship, account for the book's healthy balance between the theological and the practical dimensions.

In Chapter 1 Hunter defines disciple-making evangelism as a ministry of reaching out that "we, Christ, and the receiver are jointly engaged in." The implications are threefold. First, evangelism is what we do to present Christian faith, life, and mission as a live option to undisciplined people, both inside and outside the church. Second, evangelism is also what Jesus Christ does, through the church's *kerygma* (proclamation), *koinonia* (fellowship), and *diakonia* (service), to set people free. Third, evangelism happens when the receiver turns to Christ, to the Christian message and ethic, to a Christian congregation, and to the world in love and mission.

Chapter 2 presents "a new model for Christian witnessing," moving from the deductive to the inductive approach. Whereas the deductive model of evangelism always begins with the general and moves to the particular, the inductive model begins with the particular and moves to the general. Hunter utilizes Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" and redefines his inductive approach to two operational models: (1) The "Inductive-Grace Model" for "weak people" who come to Christ out of need (lower half of Maslow's hierarchy), and (2) The "Inductive-Mission Model" for "strong persons" who do not feel deprived but are unfulfilled and thus are motivated to involvement in Christian causes and are converted in the process (the upper half of

Maslow's hierarchy). Building on Aristotle's model, Hunter suggests that in evangelism people are persuaded by the following: (1) The logos of the message: Is it relevant, clear, and biblical? (2) The pathos of the auditor: Does the receptor feel, personalize, and act upon the information? (3) The ethos of the speaker: Is he believable and knowledgeable? In addition to basic communication problems, Hunter believes that effective evangelism strategy must deal with the basic shifts in culture which have come because of secularization. Drawing from England's Lord Soper, Hunter outlines these shifts in culture: (1) from knowledge to ignorance, (2) from death to life, (3) from guilt to doubt, and (4) from need to curiosity, and from belonging to alienation.

The concluding chapters give numerous practical "handles" for discovering receptive people, relating to unresponsive people, and mobilizing God's people in evangelism. Mission executives, missionaries, church planters, pastors, lay people, and church leaders will find useful material for rethinking evangelism strategy for the future. *The Contagious Congregation* is stimulating because Hunter puts evangelism in a more holistic framework of biblical and sociological analysis. It is motivational because "people who are receptive today do not remain receptive indefinitely." *The Contagious Congregation* is creative and challenging because it wrestles honestly with how the church bridges the gap to communicate the good news to an increasingly secularized population.

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*Henry J. Schmidt is professor of evangelism at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, Calif. He has served as pastor of Mennonite Brethren churches and as conference evangelist.*

*Dynamic Religious Movements: Case Studies of Rapidly Growing Religious Movements around the world.* Edited by David J. Hesselgrave. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978, 326 pp., \$9.95

#### Reviewed by Peter M. Hamm

For missionaries and missiologists interested in church growth, Hesselgrave's *Dynamic Religious Movements* provides a helpful series of "case studies of rapidly growing religious movements around the world," as the subtitle indicates. A quick look at the contributors verifies the diversity of their backgrounds, yet points to a commonality. Representing Reformed, Methodist, Baptist, Missionary Alliance, and Evangelical Free Church (of which there is a preponderance) denominations and such mission agencies as the Evangelical Alliance Mission, Gospel Missionary Union, Overseas Crusades, Missionary Alliance, Conservative Baptist, and Evangelical Free, all the authors (except the Tanners) have had extensive missionary service in diverse places: Botswana, Lesotho, Natal, Transvaal, Swaziland, and Zaire in Africa; Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Pakistan, Philippines, and Vietnam in Asia; Brazil, Colombia, and Costa Rica in Latin America; as well as Iran and Germany. Their educational and research backgrounds bespeak impressive credentials. What strikes the reader about their commonality is their evangelical commitment to the propagation of the Christian faith and their undeviating goal of writing from a growth perspective. Despite this common perspective, they have largely achieved their intent of making an objective analysis. This is in keeping with the purview of the book, as Hesselgrave emphasizes in his introductory chapter, not to determine the truth of religion, but to study the growth of movements grounded in supernaturalism.

Especially helpful to missionaries working among the African Independent Churches are the chapters by Phillip M. Steyne and Marie-Louise Martin. Steyne goes beyond the five factors, identified by anthropologists Gerlach and Hines, which account for the rapid growth of religious movements. He views the African Zionist Movement as a struggle for identity in a setting of rapid cultural disintegration, and Martin sees in Kimbanguism an authentic



African movement with high ethical standards (upholding nonviolence and disallowing polygamy), motivated by a deep loyalty both to Christ and Simon Kimbangu. Writing as one who has joined the movement, she avoids the usual Western misrepresentation of this truly indigenous expression of religiosity. If Frederick O. Burklin's treatment of the New Apostolic Church in Germany is representative of the dynamic in Europe, then its low profile on theological training, propaganda literature, and overt evangelism suggests what might give religious movements credibility in that cultural milieu: security and belonging prompted by authoritarian leadership, dogmatic teaching, and close-knit fellowship.

The three movements representing the Far East are aggressively propagandist. A. Leonard Tuggy portrays the Iglesia ni Cristo as an organized army mobilized for both extensive (beyond Philippines) and intensive (virtual brainwashing) propagation by all members. Everett N. Hunt, Jr., depicts the effective methods of propagating the Unification Church (Sun Myung Moon) of Korea. Hesselgrave, whose doctoral work researched the propagation of the Nichiren Buddhist sect, the Soka Gakkai, indicates how this non-Christian movement achieved its aggressive growth during the early stages of its popularity. Merlin W. Inniger's treatment of the Ahmadiya Movement shows how this renewal movement of Islam multiplies by division.

For North America, analysis deals with two classical cultic movements, rather than the more recent religious renewal of the 1960s. Wilton M. Nelson and Richard K. Smith carefully examine methods of propagation of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the two most important factors being the printed page and door-to-door appeals. Gerald and Sandra Tanner, both raised Mormons, have evaluated the effectiveness of the missionary thrust of the Latter Day Saints church, which they left. Their insights may assist missionaries in assessing short-term missionary ventures.

Latin America is represented by Donald C. Palmer's analysis of the growth of the "Jesus Only" Pentecostals in Colombia and by Harmon A. Johnson's analysis of the growth factors of the syncretic Umbanda spiritist movement of Brazil. Palmer notes the visitation teams and the lay witness of new converts as especially instrumental in the growth of the Pente-

costals, and Johnson sees the Umbanda as providing a mechanism of social homogeneity and integration for those affected by the anomie of relocating in urban areas.

A final movement, Caodaism of Vietnam, presented by Victor L. Oliver, surveys the reasons for the success of this spiritist movement, not least of which are the seances which attract many curious seekers. Most significant in this work is the concluding chapter by Hesselgrave in which he summarizes what causes religious movements to grow and ends the book with a tenfold standard against which churches, denominations, and missions can measure their progress.

The book suffers from the same diversity and breadth which also are its strengths. With so many authors covering so many movements in so brief a compass, there are bound to be generalizations which require the buttress of empirical documentation. One common generalization is the socioeconomic status which allegedly constitutes the background of the adherents. That the authors espouse essentially the same evangelical persuasion may lead some to question the objectivity of their findings. Moreover, an expression such as "south of the border" (p. 223) betrays the American orientation that marks the writers' cultural milieu, despite their cross-cultural exposure. This reader missed representation of a dynamic religious movement from the subcontinent of India where a Christian movement like Bhakt Singh or one of the many devotional movements of Hinduism have gathered followers for many centuries. Nonetheless, the authors have largely achieved their precise assignment—to keep their own judgments of the theological stance of a movement in abeyance, while examining those factors which explain the movement's growth. It is this success of the authors which adds to the value of Hesselgrave's final summary and which enables the book to achieve its distinctly missionary purpose. As G. W. Peters avers in his foreword, the book should increase the urgency of the proclamation of the gospel and loosen volumes of intercession for missionaries.

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*Faith and Freedom: Toward a Theology of Liberation.* By Schubert M. Ogden. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1979, 128 pp., \$3.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Harry Huebner**

*Faith and Freedom* grew out of the 1977 Laity Week Lectures given at Perkins School of Theology. Appropriately, the author dedicated the book to "lay theologians." Although it is a theological book, it does not presuppose fluency in theological works. It is written for the person interested in reflecting on Christian witness.

It is well written and easily read, and addresses itself to a timely concern: the articulation of a theological point of departure which does not fall into pitfalls of so much traditional theology—impracticality or theological confusion.

Ogden puts forward four criticisms of liberation theology in an attempt to give it a more credible theological foundation.

1. Liberation theology fails to distinguish adequately between theology and witness, assuming that the development of the latter implies the formulation of the former. As a result liberation theology, like so much other theology, is a rationalization of an already held position rather than a critical study of the position itself.

2. Liberation theology neglects the treatment of the metaphysical being of God. This means that the practical message of liberation theology lacks wholeness and indeed may be inconsistent because it does not flow out of a common structure.

3. Liberation theology does not distinguish properly between emancipation and liberation. Liberation is equated with emancipation from political, social, and economic bondage. Liberation as redemption from sin and guilt is not discussed.

4. Liberation theology has too restricted an understanding of the bondage from which people need liberation. It tends to concentrate on bondage resulting from human activities and ignores the fact that people are also bound by nature.

Ogden does not question whether liberation theologians should be saying the things they do; rather he asks how they can do so. What is the logical basis from which they speak? Hence he embarks on a process to clarify some basic theological underpinnings which, although in conflict with traditional theology, are needed to give it systematic integrity.

He does this by invoking the categories of process theology. He concentrates particularly on the concepts of (1) freedom, drawing out some helpful implications from the distinction between freedom **from** and freedom **for**; and (2) God, interpreting him as the ground of all freedom. Thus Ogden argues that process theology can provide liberation theology with the necessary theological foundation.

Ogden identifies the criterion for an adequate theological starting point as the Jesus-kerygma of the early Apostolic tradition. This is a touchstone the Anabaptists would also have insisted on. But the reader looks in vain for an integration of this criterion with Ogden's own method. His own categories seem determined not by the Jesus-kerygma but by process theology.

*Faith and Freedom* is a good prolegomena for a theology of liberation because it raises basic, crucial issues. But it is not itself such a theology, because it deals basically with only two themes: freedom and God. The proper understanding of these elements does not provide us with a theology of liberation though they are necessary for its development. The task of formulating a theology of liberation remains incomplete.

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*Harry Huebner is professor of philosophy at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

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*Manual for Accepted Missionary Candidates.* By Marjorie A. Collins. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1978, 125 pp., \$4.45 (pb)

#### Reviewed by John Sommer

This is a companion piece to a former work by Collins entitled *Manual for Missionaries on Furlough*, also published by William Carey Library. Her 27 chapters are organized around questions and issues that most often pop into the minds of newly appointed missionaries.

Some of Collins' topics are the changing missionary image, preparation for service, securing financial and prayer support, outfitting and shipment of baggage, medical and dental concerns, legal matters, and relationships to the mission board and supporting constituency.

Collins gives excellent advice in the whole area of marriage relationships, examining the strains and tensions that will be encountered. This is one of the most insightful chapters in the book. Another one is Ms. Collins' plea that children of missionaries be treated as people, not pawns. Too often children are forced to speak or sing in public during deputation. Often they are not consulted when "family decisions" are made concerning a new term of service or a shift of assignment.

Some of Collins' statements seem problematic from a believers church perspective. She emphasizes a subjective, highly individualized call to mission. Almost completely ignored is the biblical pattern (Acts 13) of starting with the people of God, rather than the individual volunteering and appealing for affirmation. She also predicts that "we are coming to the place where the missionary profession is held in as high esteem as that of medicine or science" (p. 9). Other statements indicate that she has an exalted view of the missionary image in today's world.

Ms. Collins gives an interesting exegesis of Paul's statements concerning the role of women in the church (p. 92). She rightly indicates that "women, as well as men, will be held accountable for the use of their gifts" (p. 95). She builds an excellent case for women in ministry, but weakens it considerably by stating at several points that women should only exercise leadership as long as men are not available!

The typical weakness of "faith" mission boards is exposed as Collins gives exhaustive hints on how to gather financial support from churches to which the candidate may otherwise have no meaningful connection. Collins encourages candidates to give popular presentations since "you will be competing with other missionaries for a hearing" (p. 37). Hints are given on building "exceedingly attractive" displays since "you are competing for attention" (p. 48).

In spite of these weaknesses, the book is an important checklist for new mission appointees. It should be considered for our orientation programs.

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*John Sommer has been overseas personnel secretary for the Commission on Overseas Mission of the General Conference Mennonite Church since 1974. The Sommers served formerly through COM in Japan as teachers and youth workers.*

*International Songbook.* Compiled by Clarence Hiebert and Rosemary Wyse. Lombard, Ill.: Mennonite World Conference, 1978, 63 songs, \$3.95 (pb)

#### Reviewed by Carol Ann Weaver

The *International Songbook* compiled by Clarence Hiebert and Rosemary Wyse, published by and for the Mennonite World Conference, is an outstanding collection of songs and texts from five continents and about 40 countries. National church leaders and musicians were consulted for songs which are both representative and singable by an international congregation. Many of the songs are translated into the five official languages of the conference with symbols indicating such musical directions as "solo," "refrain," or even "drum rhythm." The result is a compilation of musically and spiritually vivid songs, especially the Zairian "I Wish I Could Sing" and the Argentine "Like David the Shepherd I Sing" which could easily become popular favorites in Western churches.

Particularly commendable are the settings of the songs: four-part harmony for the Western hymn-chorales, guitar chords for the Israeli and Latin American songs, and no harmonizations and occasional drum rhythms for the African, Asian, and American Indian songs. Thus the integrity of the particular songs is maintained as far as is possible within the limitations of accessible Western musical notation. Certain features such as microtones (itches between half-steps) or irregular meters and rhythms are smoothed out for Western ears, but the Mennonite world would do well **first** to learn **these** songs. Perhaps at a later world conference, Mennonites will be ready for those sounds which come from deeper within the non-West.

But for now the Hiebert/Wyse work stands as a masterpiece collection of spirit-filled, international songs which could thrill both vibrant Christians and astute ethnomusicologists. The refreshing nature of this songbook lifts us in the West from our imbalanced fix on the hymn and allows us to hear with more compassion God's music of praise in our day and in our world.

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*Carol Ann Weaver is a musician, currently on the faculty of Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

*A Spirituality of the Road.* By David J. Bosch. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1979, 92 pp., \$3.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Wilbert R. Shenk**

Say "spirituality," and nine out of ten people will answer: "daily devotions." Everyone agrees that a disciplined and satisfying "devotional life" is a priority for the Christian, but closer investigation shows this to be a quite unsatisfactory part of the average Christian's experience.

In this book David Bosch, now teaching missions following a career as a missionary, explores the meaning of "spirituality" for people—especially missionaries—on the move. He admits at the outset that he approached the topic with hesitation because of what people commonly associate with the term. Using the Apostle Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, Bosch discovered a rich literature grounded in missionary experience which is thoroughly relevant to life lived "on the road."

But first we need to take a fresh look at the meaning of spirituality. Then we need to pour new content into it in light of our calling as Christians. A healthy devotional life is important but we need to keep an eye on how that relates to the rest of the hours of the day and our vocation. Living in today's rat-race world where life threatens to pull apart at the seams, we need to discover a solid spiritual foundation. This may involve ridding ourselves of the superficial or the spurious piety which we affect. Such a pious facade is not tough enough to withstand the demands of our world.

The spirituality Bosch finds in 2 Corinthians permeates our attitudes and actions; it is what we are and what we do. The helping hand should be an acting out of our prayer to God. Lending a sympathetic ear becomes a sacrament of love when behind it stands the disciplined listening to the voice of the Spirit in meditation.

*A View from the Fields.* By Calvin Miller. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman, 1978, 136 pp., \$4.95

**Reviewed by Wilbert R. Shenk**

Calvin Miller, a pastor and prolific writer, here offers his parish-eye view of church growth. Since 1966 he has served the

Westside Baptist Church, Omaha, Nebraska, a church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. His book is set within the Southern Baptist context and assumes that his primary reading audience will be Baptists of that variety.

Miller explains his viewpoint in the preface: "Church growth as a term is phenomenal to this decade. And yet in practice, growth is a basic New Testament view. Mark recorded the parable of the mustard seed. The maturation of the tiny seed to a giant tree is **explicitly referring to church growth** [emphasis added]. The growth this parable illustrates is numerical. Many are opposed to the idea of mathematics in the Kingdom. For them the categories of 'better Christians' and 'more Christians' are antithetical. But I know of no way to grow a *deeper* church without growing a *bigger* church." The parable of the mustard seed is about the kingdom, of course, and not the church. Although the author cites scriptural texts from time to time, he does not offer a well-defined biblical foundation for his message. Rather this is a readable discussion of the contemporary situation and the author's experiences and convictions about evangelism and church growth in the urban world.

His heroes are the Jerry Falwells—pastors of rapidly growing large churches. The villains are left-of-center theologians. Dean Kelley serves as father confessor. Miller cannot quite conceal a curious ambivalence. Intellectually, he savors the fare offered by the formative minds in the social sciences, the arts, and theology. Emotionally, he remains committed to the sectarian tradition. In a chapter mistitled "The Theology of Church Growth," he characterizes a theology of church growth as conservative, urgent, simple. This chapter presents not the content of a theology of church growth but the stance from which Miller believes it ought to proceed. Ultimately, he opts for what will bring success. We need to hear this viewpoint, but one is left wondering if the only choices are those Miller poses. My reading of the Bible suggests it isn't quite that simple.

*Wilbert R. Shenk is secretary of overseas missions, Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, Indiana.*



# Editorial

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This issue of *Mission Focus* offers a brief comparative study of five mission traditions and continues what we began in the March 1979 issue with John Driver's essay on the believers church tradition vision of mission. In the workaday world we may fail to pause and ask what the particular character and values of various missionary traditions consist of. And we find it difficult to assess the direction in which each stream is flowing today—points at which they are drawing closer to each other, and points at which they diverge still further.

That these several studies are limited should be self-evident. Limitations of space constrain each writer to be brief. Our authors give us their personal interpretations of the particular tradition each represents. Furthermore, not all traditions are accounted for here. These essays should be read as the views of knowledgeable observers from within these particular streams of missionary experience.

Two of the writers depict the deep ferment which has permeated missions in recent decades. Burrows and Danker describe changes taking place in the larger world environment which have had direct repercussions on the life of the church. Burrows takes Troeltsch as an example of how Christians in an earlier generation attempted to accommodate themselves to the dynamics of cultural change. One could find examples of quite different responses to these same dynamics among Troeltsch's contemporaries. It is instructive to note the way such decisions affect direction and identity of a movement.

One of the key issues in the larger ferment is the challenge of other religions to Christian theology. In the nineteenth century leading observers held that the other religions suffered from a fatal internal decay and would soon collapse of their own dead weight. Contrary to these predictions, the other religions have experienced a resurgence. Taking a cue from Christians, or in reaction to the challenge missions posed, in some cases they have also launched missionary efforts. The problem of the theological meaning of the other religions, therefore, is vigorously alive and well today and must be addressed.

Several writers refer to the key role Scripture plays in informing and undergirding mission. But within this general agreement we find varying understandings. The emphasis today falls on doing theology **in context**. Rather than simplifying the task of interpreting the Scriptures, this places a new importance on the Bible and how it functions in the life of the believing community.

Another theme which emerges is the theocentric/Christocentric basis of mission. Such a point of consensus is noteworthy. The missionary nature of the church is seen to flow from the will and action of God, revealed most fully in the sending of Jesus Christ. Indeed, with the exception of Frizen, who approaches the subject from a different angle, each author emphasizes this theological vision as the bedrock of mission.

Gort, Castro, and Driver agree that the object of mission is the establishment of God's rule on earth. Mission becomes the action by which God effects his reign in the lives of men and women. The ways in which this is taking place need to be explored more fully. Driver emphasizes the importance of the messianic community in God's purposes.

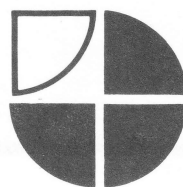
Both Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions see mission in the broadest terms—as a movement reaching out and affecting the whole of creation. Other traditions proceed from a more narrowly defined purpose. In general, the question of the extent to which ethics relates to evangelism is a much-disputed point.

In spite of broad agreement that mission originates in the will and action of God, we do not find consensus on the precise focus missionary action should have: on the poor and oppressed, on the "unreached," or an across-the-board approach. This reflects a further point of unclarity, namely, the nature of God's rule. What does it mean to say that God's kingdom has come into the lives of people now? What implications will this have for the way they live in the future?

The recent emphasis on the missionary character of the whole church shows through in these essays. Not only does this run the risk of generalizing a valid point into meaninglessness; it obscures the role of the vanguard of "apostles" who are Spirit-gifted to lead the whole people in missionary obedience. We need to think further about an even more dynamic understanding of the nature of the church as a missionary people while keeping clear the special role of the evangelists and apostles.

Only one of the essays describes a system of missionary action—that of the "faith" mission tradition. Frizen's splendidly clear presentation illustrates the power in method. A movement with clearly focused goals and a supporting method can rally enormous resources to do a task. This tradition reminds us of the importance of system.—Wilbert R. Shenk

# MISSION FOCUS



## The Church in Burma

DOROTHY FRIESEN

Two young Christian students from the rural area were boarding with a Buddhist family in Rangoon. After observing their weekly church attendance the landlady said, "How sad for you that you do not have your own religion and have to go off to this foreign one every Sunday." An older Christian advised the students to reply, "If we get cloth from Japan and fashion a shirt for ourselves, then that shirt is not Japanese. It was made to our specifications and now it is a Burmese shirt."

The landlady's comment represents an attitude toward Christianity common among Burma's predominantly Buddhist population. Christians comprise less than five percent of the population of Burma; most are from ethnic minority groups with animist background, like the Karen, Kachin, and Chin people. The subject of this paper is the church's attempt to take the fabric of the gospel and fashion it into a shirt wearable in Burmese culture.

### The context

The present-day Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma borders Bangladesh, India, China, Laos, and Thailand. Burma is unique among southeast Asian nations: it has a quasi-socialist economy but is strictly neutral politically. Though it was one of the founding groups of the non-aligned conference of nations, Burma recently resigned, protesting the organization's departure from genuine neutrality.

Burma's language, culture, and political life stretch back to at least the fifth century A.D. Its golden age began in the eleventh century, centering in the north-central town of Pagan. Thousands of temples, pagodas, and stupas—some in ruins and some still in use—can be seen in this sixteen-square-mile area. A series of kingdoms rose and fell over the centuries until the British interrupted the continuity between the old kingdoms and modern Burma, annexing the entire country by 1885. Christian missionaries, especially American Baptists, had been active in Burma from the early nineteenth century.

During World War 2 Burmese nationalists, notably nationalist leader Aung San and the Thirty Comrades, welcomed the Japanese as liberators and eagerly participated in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere until they became disillusioned with Japanese intentions. Burma gained independence in 1948 and, unlike India, chose not to remain in the British Commonwealth. Under President U Nu, Burma had a democratic socialist form of government which emphasized Buddhism as the guiding state religion.

In a bloodless coup in 1962, General Ne Win took over the government and instituted the "Burmese Way to Socialism." Nationalization of key industries, land reform,

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*Dorothy Friesen has just completed an assignment in the Philippines with Mennonite Central Committee.*

a period of relative isolation from the world, and emphasis on "Burmanization" of the country followed. This policy affected the church; hospitals and schools were taken over by the government and most foreign missionaries were asked to leave.

In contrast to many Asian Christians, Burmese Christians must deal with relative geographical isolation from Christians in other countries; the context of their witness is a Buddhist culture and a socialist society. In common with most other Asian churches, the Burmese church faces issues related to its role in a developing country, its minority status, accusations that it is a foreign body, Burmese concern for self-reliance, and the nature of its relationship to a richer Western church.

### The Christian faith as a foreign religion

One of the first missionaries to Burma—certainly the most famous—was Adoniram Judson. Judson and his wife, Ann Hasseltine, arrived in Rangoon on July 13, 1813. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had sent the Judsons, and they expected to work in Serampore, India, near the well-known Baptist missionary, William Carey. As Adoniram and Ann traveled by ship from North America, they pondered how they would defend child baptism to William Carey and the other Baptist missionaries. They began to study the relevant Scriptures and concluded that they could not defend child baptism. As a result the ABCFM disengaged them and they appealed to the Baptists in North America to accept them as their missionaries. In her diary, Ann recorded her anxiety about what their families would think, but Adoniram's convictions about the message of the Scriptures prevailed.

The Judsons did not receive permission to stay in India, and finally their only recourse to stay in Asia involved boarding a ship for Rangoon. Under these peculiar circumstances the Judsons arrived in Burma, at that time still an independent Buddhist kingdom.

### *The multiple identities of the missionary.*

Judson's first tract indicates that he had studied the basics of Buddhism. He began his tract with the assertion that God exists and he is always in the state of Nirvana (the goal of Buddhism): "There is One Being who exists eternally, who is exempt from sickness, old age, and death, who was and is and will be without beginning and without end. Besides this, the true God, there is no other God."

In this tract Judson also explained his own role in sharing information about the One Being. *The teacher who composed this writing seeing the great evil which is coming on the Burmans . . . left his own country from compassion. . . . He desires neither fame nor riches. Offerings nor gifts he seeks not. The disciples in his own country moved with compassion for the Burmans make offering sufficient for his use. He has no other motive*

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*but this; being a disciple of Christ and therefore seeking the good of others as his own, he has come and is laboring that the Burmans may be saved from the dreadful punishment of hell and enjoy the happiness of heaven.* Thus Judson's first public written statement dealt clearly and firmly with his purpose in Burma, his identity, and his financial base.

#### *Dual loyalties?*

When the British annexed the lower part of Burma, Judson and other foreigners in Rangoon were imprisoned. To say that Judson was imprisoned for the gospel's sake must be qualified. The Judsons had a good friend, a private entrepreneur who had once worked for the East India Company. This friend, Henry Gouger, had seen a newspaper which indicated that the British were going to attack Burma. He was arrested because he had not informed the king.

When the Burmese looked at Gouger's accounts, they noted that he had given money to Judson. The Burmese believed that Judson was in Gouger's pay, and that Gouger was probably in the pay of the British. Actually, Gouger had given Judson cash for a check which Gouger in turn cashed in a bank in Calcutta where he often traveled. To the Burmese, it seemed foolish that Judson could get gold in exchange for a little piece of paper. This missionary-businessman "collusion" was the reason for Judson's imprisonment.

Mixed with the Burmese suspicion of any religion was antagonism toward British colonialism. When the Burmese Way to Socialism was instituted, the population was taught about the three M's: Missionary, Merchant, Military. First came the missionary to soften the population, then came the merchant to trade, and finally the British military came to take over Burma.

The Judsons always insisted they were not British, but American, and thus should not be treated with the same suspicion. However, they received much encouragement and support from England and had many contacts there. In fact, Ann made a trip to Britain sponsored by a friend who was a member of the British parliament. Burma scholar Helen Trager says, "In their quiet way the Burmese apparently recognized both their separate American identity and their dual loyalty."

The insecurity foreigners faced during the time of Judson's imprisonment made a lasting impression on Ann. In 1823 her account of this imprisonment was published: *Burmese are politically and morally wretched, but we know the Lord is able to bring to pass a reformation among them. Surrounded by such people we continue to feel our situation dangerous and our security is only in the providence of God.*

Other missionaries too felt harassed, and their insecurity was reflected in their attitudes toward the Burmese. *While the Gaudama forbids to take the life of any animated being the Burmans are blood thirsty, cruel and vindictive. . . . While the law denounces covetousness they are almost to a man dishonest, rapacious, prone to robbery. . . . The law forbids on all occasions treachery and deceit and yet from the highest to the lowest they are a nation of liars.* Reports like these from Burma were published in Britain and the United States and provided justification for Western intervention; Helen Trager concludes that they "helped to prepare the way for the further annexation of Burma by the British."

The genuine conscious concern on the part of the missionaries was the furtherance of the gospel, not the empire, but unconsciously the two seemed to merge at times. One missionary writing during the time of an imminent British operation in Burma revealed his understanding of how God brings people to himself: *There is an appearance that the English will now be compelled to do one of two things; either take Burma as an additional territory and incorporate it as a part of the Indian empire, or bring the Burman government so low that all white faces will be hereafter respected and treated with consideration. In either of these two events our mission will be extended and men and women be needed to enter in and reap the harvest.*

Nearly 140 years later when Burma gained its independence, the Karen population, many of whom were Baptists, staged an insurrection to establish a separate independent state. At one point in 1949 it looked as though the Karen would be successful, for they controlled almost all of Burma. During that time the American Baptist Association in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, published a picture of the victorious Karen with a quote from Judson: "The prospects for evangelism are as bright as the promises of God." This accompanied a glowing report of the Karen victories, the territory they controlled, and how their successes would further the progress of mission work.

#### *Legacy to the Burmese church.*

It is small wonder then that the Christians in Burma have confronted suspicion not so much because of their faith but because of their connections with the West. This is the legacy not only of the Burmese church but of every Asian church.

Christians in Burma generally have more education than the average Burmese. This is partly the result of the advantage they enjoyed during the days of British rule. It is also a result of the schools and hospitals opened by the missionaries in Burma. Though reliable statistics are not available, officials at the Burma National Council of Churches estimate that the average Christian farmer between the ages of forty and fifty is more literate than his Buddhist counterpart.

The Chin Christians, for example, have a higher literacy rate and higher economic status than the average Chin. Some Chin Christians attribute this to the fact that they no longer sacrifice their best animals and food to the spirits.

In 1887 Bishop Bigandet wrote from Rangoon, *Indeed with the people of these parts religion and nationality is so intimately interconnected, so thoroughly blended together that they form the same whole. Religion cannot be forsaken without giving up nationality and the fact of embracing the religion of another people is equivalent to becoming a member of the same social or political body.*

"We Christians used to be called the Voice of America by the Buddhist population," said one elderly Christian woman. However, through the Christians' persistent efforts the government and some of the population have realized that the Christian faith has taken root in the country and will remain.

Because of the economically difficult times and the lack of opportunity for advancement, many educated Burmese are applying to leave. Some, tired of waiting for legal permission, slip across the border to Thailand where they

hope to apply for immigration to a third country. Christians are among them.

Christian leaders are concerned about this trend. In a speech to university graduates in Rangoon, U Aung Khin, General Secretary of the Burma Council of Churches reminded the students that they have had an opportunity only one in 1,000 people in Burma have—higher education. "Use it to serve the people here. Don't run away to other countries." In an emotion-filled voice he concluded, "Just let me ask you one thing. Is God's hand not over Burma? Do you not believe that he will watch over us here in Burma?"

### Life of the church: Buddhism and Christianity

As in most countries, the church is not a monolithic structure. Among the Protestants, Baptists form the larger group—over fifty-four percent of the whole. The Burma Baptist Convention is comprised of thirteen smaller conferences based on language and ethnic differences. With the exception of the few Rangoon congregations, "Jew" and "Gentile" do not mix.

The largest group within the Baptist Convention is the Karen, one of the first groups to be evangelized. The other two large conferences are the Kachin on the China border and the Chin on the India border to the West. One of the smallest conferences within the BBC is the Burma Baptist Churches Union. However, it represents the majority group of the Burmese population, the Burmans.

One of Judson's mission strategies was the use of a *zayat*, a shelter where travelers rested or men gathered to talk or listen to Buddhist lay teachers. Judson constructed his own *zayat* by the side of the road and sat in it waiting for people to come to talk with him. His third wife, Emily, a writer, described the long hours he spent there looking out at passers-by, feeling that he was wasting time, yet not wanting to read or do other work in case people coming by needed a smile to encourage them to come in and talk. Conversions among the Buddhist Burman population were rare.

Later missionaries, realizing the difficulties surrounding Burmese conversions to Christianity, began to develop Christian villages. People abandoned their homes to move to a new village, to enjoy the support, security, and encouragement provided by living near other Christians. This practice was not unique to Burma; Dutch Mennonite missionary Pieter Jansz used the village strategy in Java around the same time. Almost from the beginning the missionaries saw the need to provide help in agriculture, education, and health.

The *zayat* as a beginning point and the Christian villages as a later strategy have both been abandoned now. After the institution of the Burmese Way to Socialism, government nationalized mission schools and hospitals. "This was a blessing in disguise," said one pastor. The early strategy of Christian villages and compounds may have been an important way to nurture the first generation of Christians, but the Burmese Christians now think that it also set them apart from their Buddhist neighbors. "It took the government to wake us up," said one Anglican priest in Rangoon.

The nationalization process in the early 1960s was not aimed specifically at the Christian church but rather at Western influence in general. "Society really did

change," people said. "Western dress disappeared and both men and women wore the traditional *longyi*s. We didn't know what to do," admitted many Christians. "But we were forced to live more closely with our Buddhist neighbors. We had to live the gospel as people; we could not depend on our institutions to be our witness."

Many Burmese Christians alluded to the quotation from the Sermon on the Mount about salt and light. *Before, we were trying to be a light on the hill in our compound schools and hospitals; then when the government nationalized them, we were forced to go out into the world. Salt loses itself in the substance, but its influence is still tasted. That is our role now—to be salt in the society.*

If representatives from the Burma Baptist Churches Union are asked about church growth, they reply that growth is about three percent per year as children of Christians become Christians. The Burma Baptist Churches Union emphasizes evangelism through life and relationships and is cautious about open-air preaching and gospel teams used by the Karen. These evangelistic campaign methods, they say, are not appropriate for Buddhists, who are secure and happy in their way of life.

Ann Hasseltine recorded a revealing incident in one of her Bible classes. The Burmese women came to the Judson home regularly and listened politely to Ann's teachings. One woman told Ann quite frankly after the class that she would rather spend eternity in hell with her own family and ancestors than in heaven with a lot of people she did not know. One-hundred-fifty years later this Buddhist attitude has not changed appreciably. Given this fact we can understand that the Union has only 9,000 members. Judson worked for six years before the first Burmese became a Christian.

During that time Judson studied Buddhism and was influenced by it. After the deaths of his first wife, his child, and his father within less than a year, Judson was forced to examine his motives and desire to excel. He separated himself from the other missionaries and spent long hours in meditation. At one point, taking only a little rice, he stayed for forty days and nights in an abandoned pagoda in the hills of Moulmein. Beside an open grave he meditated on the decay of the physical body. In this deep crisis, touching the mystery of the Other, he said, "God is to me the great Unknown. I believe in him, but I find him not."

From then on he refused dinner invitations from British officials, destroyed letters of praise sent to him, renounced the honorary doctor of divinity degree he had received, and gave his private wealth to the Baptist board. Some of this disciplining of pride can be traced to roots in American pietism, but the long hours of meditation and new understanding evidence Buddhist influence. Many of Judson's early biographers, including his son, were embarrassed by this part of Judson's life.

In 1960, Paul D. Clasper, a Baptist missionary teaching at the Burma Institute of Theology, wrote a small pamphlet about Buddhist-Christian relationships in Burma. He noted that the two religions had existed side by side without much intermingling. Both Theravada Buddhists and Baptist Christians are conservative representatives of their religions. Clasper predicted that the two groups were on the verge of greater relationship and dialogue which could enrich both. Twenty years later



this new step in relationship has not been taken. Some individuals in the church are consciously engaged in this conversation, but the majority of evangelical Baptists who are interested in the salvation of their neighbors concentrate on the animist population.

One notable exception to this general pattern is a fairly new movement, the Urban Rural Mission. In many countries of Asia the URM, part of the World Council of Churches, is particularly involved in social justice issues and much less in missions and evangelism. This is not true in Burma. The board of the URM is composed of lay people as well as pastors from Anglican, Baptist, and Methodist backgrounds. The full-time staff, field organizers, and local participants are Karen, Kachin, Chinese, Burmans, Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists.

In Pegu, a trading city two hours northeast of Rangoon, a series of guilds or small gatherings based on interests such as art, music, English conversation, and economic development have been set up for the purpose of evangelization and outreach. Through the activities and relationships built in the guilds many of the Buddhist young people in Pegu have become interested in the one God. Recently several became Christian and were baptized. Many others might be termed seekers who attend a Bible discussion club weekly in order to find out more about the Christian faith. This URM effort bears some resemblance to Judson's *zayat* strategy.

The founder of these guilds, Ko Myo Aung, is a Christian businessman with Christian and Marxist background. A friend says of him, *If Ko Myo Aung thinks he is speaking to an evangelical who emphasizes the saving of souls, he talks about social concerns. If he is talking to someone with social concerns, he emphasizes Christian faith and witness.*

The URM includes professionals from the city, doctors, and university graduates, as well as unschooled villagers, particularly in the Irrawaddy delta. Alan Saw U, Secretary of URM, says, *The only way Buddhists will take the Christian message seriously is if Christians live side by side with them and connect the daily realities we all face with the deeper meaning of the gospel. It has to be in action, not just dialogue.*

### Burmese way to socialism

When General Ne Win took power in 1962 he declared, "We follow the line which is best for Burma and Burma decides what is best for her. We will select what we want from other systems, both from East and from West." According to Ne Win, the Burmese Way to Socialism takes due account of Buddhism as central to Burmese culture. He described this Burmese way as the progressive transformation of society.

The Burmese Way to Socialism has received the approval of the majority in the society because it conforms to the society's basic values. For example, Burmese society was never strongly hierarchical. It is a traditional value to have each farmer till his own land, so the land reform program has support. A real collectivization process in the rural areas has not begun. *Pyidwatha*, a Burmese word referring to the general welfare, emphasizes that everyone should be cared for. Burmese socialism builds on that traditional value.

### Buddhism and the Burmese Way to Socialism.

Some may wonder how Buddhism and Marxism fit together in one program. U Nu, the former president of Burma, saw Marxist themes as the key to building the ideal Buddhist society. Some simplistic comparisons show contradictions. The Buddhist understanding of history, for example, is cyclical and evolutionary, the Marxist linear and revolutionary. The Buddhist seeks change through meditation, the Marxist through struggle. The Buddhist emphasizes the importance of the individual pilgrimage to Nirvana, the Marxist the masses' participation in revolutionary change. Buddhism holds out the hope of spiritual liberation; Marxism the hope of economic and political liberation.

But U Nu saw Marxism as overcoming economic suffering while Buddhism overcomes universal suffering. He appreciated the principle of production for mass consumption rather than for profit. He said, "When everyone has enough, then they will be able to meditate about impermanence."

### Christian values and the Burmese Way to Socialism.

Christians in Burma—pastors, lay people, Catholics, and Protestants—basically agree with the Burmese Way to Socialism. U Aung Khin, BCC executive secretary, commented that the emphasis on equality and concern for one's fellowmen and women is certainly a Christian value. U Kyaw Than, director of Ticpind, and Training Institute for Christian Participation in National Development, said the government's aims and goals are way ahead of the church: "They have seized the prophetic role from the church." The problem, suggested many, is that the Burmese Way to Socialism is not being implemented. Corruption, lack of political will, and limited resources make the implementation extremely difficult. However, one pastor commented, "The problem of corruption is not a problem of socialism, but a problem of an underdeveloped country." The few critical comments about the system itself came from Christians with military backgrounds: "What we now have is socialism for the military," said one Christian wryly.

### Self-reliance and foreign influence

Aung San, Burmese independence leader, said in 1947, *I tell you that no country can really be free as long as she depends on the charity of foreigners for her revenues. We must achieve our freedom by ourselves with our own money.* Other Asian leaders have said similar things, but only in Burma and China have firm measures been taken to make this reality. Burma may be the only country which paid back the United States government for the food used in the P.L.480 program.

The Burmese concern for independence and self-reliance is also evident in the church. The Burmese spontaneously mentioned their concern about financial self-reliance and their plans to achieve it. Church bureaucrats and pastors were quite open about their salaries and where the money came from to keep the programs of the church running. Many of them had taken voluntary cuts in salary as a result of implementing the Burmese Way to Socialism.



"If foreign subsidies were withdrawn from Burma," said one young Christian, "the Burma Council of Churches would fold but the local congregations would continue." If the "folding" depended only on finances, this might be a true statement. The finance department of the BCC reports that they receive an operating subsidy of \$6,000 per year from the World Council of Churches, 10,000 Kyats (7 Kyats to \$1) from the congregations in Burma, and 23,000 Kyats from the government. The government contribution to BCC administration is twice as much as that of the churches. The BCC executive secretary said sadly, *I come from a small farm family. We were self-sufficient and had no debts, but when I came to work with the BCC I found that most of our money comes from the outside. How long can this go on?*

Almost from their inception, local Baptist churches have been basically self-reliant. In Chin State, for example, when an area had been evangelized and congregations set up, four neighboring churches went together to support a pastor. The pastor's support was meager, perhaps 100 Kyats per month, but the congregation also made other contributions. These congregations also gave money for their regional grouping as well as for the Chin Baptist Convention.

In the Philippines many trained Christians no longer want to stay in the rural areas, preferring to serve city churches or even to go abroad. This is not a problem in Burma, according to church leaders. "We almost have to beg the different conventions to send us some of their people to work at the national level, to work at the National Council or in the seminaries." Most groups want to keep their trained pastors to serve in their own areas.

The Burma Baptist Convention, the national grouping of Baptists, receives its money basically from three sources. On Judson Day—the Sunday closest to July 13, the day Judson landed in Burma—every congregation takes a special collection and forwards it to the BBC. Each Baptist Conference in Burma pledges a certain amount yearly. A small amount comes from overseas, but this foreign subsidy is declining. In a time of great inflation, individual Christians have done well in supporting their church programs.

In addition to foreign subsidies for administrative costs, the Burmese Protestant Church also receives foreign church aid for development work. Some Christians mentioned examples of church splits caused by the influx of foreign money for development projects. Within the church outside money for economic development projects has caused fights centered around who would take charge of the money, who would be accountable, how the project would be done, and who would benefit.

Some younger Christians involved in grass-roots community work were concerned about the effects of foreign money flowing into local communities. "Of course, in order to develop economically we will need something from outside," they said, "but the community must first be organized and ready and must know what place these funds will occupy in the total community building process."

"But," counters U Kyaw Than, former secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia and former professor at Yale Divinity School, "within the whole scheme of things the Christian contribution to development is a drop in the bucket." U Kyaw Than is impatient with those who advise

caution about the influx of foreign money. "Who are the people with three cars in their garage in North America to say that we in Burma must continue with our bullock cart?" His emphasis is on the ecumenical sharing of resources, on the use of church money from the developed world in development projects in line with the Burmese government goals. In response to the idea that government and church views might be different, U Kyaw Than's contrast was in quantitative terms: "The government is able to do much more because it has a broader base and more money."

The grass-roots workers of the URM team use a different language to answer the question about a Christian view of development. They speak of "people's movement," of "people participating in decisions that affect their lives," and of "sacrificing themselves for the people." Most of the URM workers receive less than 200 Kyat per month stipend, and some are completely supported by the villages in which they work.

"Have you noticed," asked one organizer, "that the Reverends speak about development and we lay people speak about Christian mission?" In many cases in the Burma church as well as in most other churches of the developed and developing world, the organic relationship between Christian faith, social justice, and development has not been recognized. When church people were questioned about Christian responsibility in the present Burmese context, most replied that the constitution guaranteed freedom of religion. Freedom of religion meant that they could worship God in their own way and they had freedom to proselytize, which they were doing. Almost no one mentioned the social, economic, or political implications of the gospel and the fact that Christians had to be creative to live out these implications in the Burmese context.

"Events in the world are organically connected with one another and, whether we like it or not, we are influenced by them. It is therefore imperative to follow and understand things in the world intelligently," said Aung San, Burmese national liberation hero, over thirty years ago. Christians today in Burma are eager to know what is happening in evangelical circles in North America. Even though there are no foreign missionaries in Burma and contact is minimal, what happens in the United States among evangelicals and conservatives in the church affects Burmese Christians.

In the Chin Special Division in the highlands bordering India and Bangladesh, the Chin Christians are mostly Baptist, Methodist, Anglican, and Catholic. Ninety-five percent of the Northern State is Christian, but in the south a much smaller percentage is Christian. The Chin in the north have for the past twelve years sent their own missionaries to the south.

The Chin Christians have been receiving tracts and other Christian literature from visitors crossing the border illegally from India. Pentecostal churches stemming from Indian influence have caused many church splits. One young Chin worker said, "They are not converting animists. They are stealing sheep from the other churches." In the Falam area where the Baptist church is strong, a number of church splits have occurred in the last six months.

*The people are confused. Missionaries come across the border and tell them they are not spiritual enough and*

*that they are supporting guerrilla movements in Rhodesia through their affiliation with the Burma Council of Churches. Most of our people never heard of, or concern themselves with the BCC, never mind the World Council of Churches,* said a Chin Christian leader. The literacy rate among Chin Christians is sixty percent. The Chin Christian continued, *We are concentrating on building up our churches and sending some of our people as missionaries to the Southern Chin State. This kind of disruption from other Christian groups slows down the work.*

Thang Tin Sum, a Chin coordinating the functional literacy program among his people, says, "We are forced to find out what is happening in the Western churches because sooner or later your issues there become our issues here."

Even with the encouragement the government has given the church (through legal restrictions) to become self-reliant and work on its own agenda, the issues of the American Protestant scene continue to force themselves on the Burmese church. The corrupting influence of outside forces—whether different ideologies or big money—is a danger some of the people in the church are taking seriously. The BCC is planning a Unity Seminar in the Chin Hills to deal with the questions confronting local Christians.

The Baptist church in Burma is remarkable in that it carries both evangelical and ecumenical concerns. It belongs to the World Council of Churches through the BCC and the Christian Conference of Asia, and it continues its bilateral relationship with the American Baptists in Valley Forge. Since the majority group in the BCC is Baptist, the Council has a different flavor than many national councils. "We are evangelically inclined but we are not emotionally or quarrelsomely evangelical," says U Aung Khin, BCC secretary.

A year ago in an interview with Christian Conference of Asia News, U Aung Khin noted that the reason for the lack of deep polarization among the Burmese Christians was "the fact that we have no foreign missionaries who come and divide us." While foreign workers are not allowed in Burma, foreign cash is welcome. Groups like Campus Crusade and World Vision hire local Burmese to be their organization's representatives in the country.

*When Campus Crusade was going to come into Burma, we asked them to work with us,* said one member of the BCC, *but they refused. They had a lot of money to pay high salaries. Our workers, paid by the local churches,*

*make one-third the beginning salary of a Campus Crusade staffer.*

"The government is confused, too," says the BCC member. "They thought they dealt with the Protestants in Burma when they dealt with the BCC." In one case letters of clarification had to be written, separating the BCC from the actions of some of the new groups.

### Learning to implement servanthood theology

Some of the first missionaries to Kachin State were from the Karen peoples. During the Kachin Centennial Celebration, one Karen leader said, "We Karen people brought you the gospel, but now you are far ahead of us and we will learn from you." This is the position we North American Christians find ourselves in, in relation to the Burmese church.

We have much to learn from their courage in facing changes in their role within society, from their ability to carry both evangelical and ecumenical concerns, and from their holistic approach to the gospel.

We can also learn from the situation in Burma. The church's attempt to live out the gospel in the Burmese context has been aided rather than hindered by the Burmese government's nationalization policy.

The health of the present day Burmese church should put to rest the restricted understanding of the conditions necessary for God's Spirit to work. The language of "closed doors" and "open doors" to refer to countries where visas for foreigners are not easily obtainable, is not helpful. Closed doors do not mean that God's Spirit and local Christians are not working; it only means foreign missionaries are not welcome.

In his advice to new missionary candidates in 1832, Judson warned them against "genteel living." "The mode of living adopted by many missionaries in the East is quite inconsistent with that familiar intercourse with the natives which is essential to a missionary."

The idea of thousands of middle class missionaries in their more-than-comfortable homes, with large vans, children in expensive international schools, gardeners, cooks, and maids which seems "normal" elsewhere in Asia now seems ludicrous in socialist Burma.

"It took the government to wake us up," said one Christian, commenting on the church's life in Burma. Will we wait for government action in each Asian country to help us implement our servanthood theology?

# Islamic Resurgence: Something New or Something Old?

DAVID OSBORNE

The Islamic resurgence now occurring in Iran has caught the attention of the Western world. This unanticipated revolution has been portrayed in religious terms, as an **Islamic** revolution. How should we in the West interpret these events? Should the Christian church be alarmed? appalled? supportive? encouraged? While I am not a serious student of Islam, during my past three years in Jordan I have done much thinking and watching, some listening and reading, to arrive at a personal understanding of this Islamic resurgence.

Although events in Iran have captured Western attention, current Islamic resurgence is not limited to Iran. It is evident in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and other countries with sizeable Muslim populations. The form of resurgence differs from country to country; it has definite national characteristics. Therefore one needs to be cautious about generalizing when speaking about these events.

We in the West must understand that the resurgence is genuine; it is not merely a superficial, temporary movement. We must dismiss outright the explanation some give, that recent Muslim attention to their traditional religious forms is all bought with Saudi petro-dollars. While oil money does support Islamic schools, political parties, mosques, and other institutions, the notion that "the Saudis are behind it all" is naive and inaccurate. Serious Muslim concern for their Islamic identity crosses social lines; rich and poor people, educated and uneducated, young and old, male and female reflect such concern. We must regard the resurgence as a substantive socioreligious phenomenon.

My personal understanding of this is that it offers both potential good and potential evil. Because the Islamic world is often misunderstood and maligned in the West, we must foster awareness of the positive elements, those elements which may even serve as an inspiration for Western Christians. But we must also identify present and potential weaknesses and evils of the resurgence.

## Dangers of resurgence

Like original Islam, the present revival is iconoclastic in nature: the deities which Mohammad destroyed in Mecca have been replaced by gods of modernity which must also be denounced. In the struggle to confront these modern false gods, the iconoclasts are in danger of identifying their militance with divine will. The Qur'an has no prohibitions against militance or the use of force except

the ultimate scruple that power be used "on behalf of God" and "in His way." Whether the direction of the current resurgence is according to the Qur'anic spirit or towards a more self-seeking chauvinism remains to be seen.

A second potential source of trouble rests in the nature of Islam itself. A religious revival of the call to "submit to God" or to "Islam" inevitably will have an impact on human-to-human interaction. This revival has many implications for personal and corporate behavior. Consequently, the need to give visible expression to renewed interest in Islamic identity can be misdirected into destructive behavior—destructive both for the self and for others. The Eastern churches of Jordan, eight percent of Jordan's population, perceive Islamic resurgence as a threat. While this article is not the proper forum for addressing this Christian-Islamic tension, we in the Western churches should not dismiss these perceptions of Eastern Christians as only a manifestation of their "persecution complex." The anxiety among Christians who live as a minority in the Islamic world has some basis in reality. And the activities of some Western church workers in the Middle East have even exacerbated Christian-Muslim tensions.

## Positive aspects of resurgence

We begin to understand the positive elements of Muslims' renewed interest in their identity when we attempt to answer the question, "Why?" What has been the impetus behind the revival? What is its sustaining force? What is the attraction? While these questions defy simple answers, one needs nevertheless to look for common denominators in the various countries and in the various expressions of the Islamic resurgence. In better understanding the "why" of the movement we can begin to appreciate its constructive aspects.

A common thread of frustration can be seen among the peoples of those Muslim countries currently experiencing renewal. They have been frustrated in their attempt to adopt the civil religion and pseudo-religions of the twentieth century. Other attempts in the Muslim world to bring order to social and political spheres have not succeeded. For example, some countries in the Middle East have gone the route of Westernization; the result is disillusionment with Western civilization, with moral decay and social injustice which accompany efforts to copy Western economic, social, and political systems. Neither capitalist nor communist structures fit the Islamic world. Yet another pseudo-religion has been tried and found wanting: Arab nationalism. The masses in the Arab Muslim nations express growing dissatisfaction with the slogans and rhetoric of Arab nationalism. Undoubtedly

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other sources of frustration could be mentioned; for instance, people in the West Bank experience increasing frustration because of the lack of movement toward a fair answer to the Palestinian cry for justice.

### The call to recognize true lordship

As the veneer of these modern false gods wears thin and the list of unfulfilled promises lengthens, Muslims in the Middle East begin to look seriously for a solid reference point, for a source of meaning and order in their lives. It should not come as a surprise that Muslims who want to bring personal and corporate relationships into line with a code or system they trust and can identify as uniquely their own demonstrate renewed interest in basic tenets of their inherited faith. In fact, Muslims stress that their resurgence is not based on some new addition to their religion. On the contrary, they want to affirm that their current desire is to apply Islamic principles which have been present all along but were neglected because believers were deceived into following false deities of the modern world.

Behind more superficial religious acts evident among Muslims is a growing concern for a deeper religious identity. Our Western vernacular phrase, "back to the grass roots," expresses something of the present mood. Western Christians who are not sure whether to be bothered or inspired by Islamic religious expressions need to see past the "sharia" garb of the Muslim world to a much deeper spiritual concern. Along with thousands—perhaps millions—of Muslims, we must look to the spirit of the Qur'an to find understanding of this phenomenon, and to enable our sympathetic consideration of the Islamic world. Three key Arabic phrases serve as a reminder to us Westerners that the spirit of the Qur'an holds potential for radical religious discipleship among Muslims throughout the world.

The first phrase expresses the core of Qur'anic theism, the source of meaning in human existence. At the beginning of the Muslim creed (shehadeh) is the Arabic phrase: "*la ilaaha illa allah*—there is no god but God." This affirmation appears in many places in the Qur'an: "There is no god but He" (Surah 2:163); "There is no god but Thou" (21:87); "Truly I am God, there is no god save Me; then worship Me and be at prayer in My remembrance" (20:14); "There is no other god by Me; therefore fear Me (16:2). Like Judeo-Christian Scriptures, the Qur'an sees God as utterly real and relates its theism not to "proofs" but to a recognition that "there is no other god but God." Kenneth Cragg's *The Mind of the Qur'an*

can aid our understanding of the importance Muslims attach to recognition of the Lordship of God: "The whole urgency of the Qur'an is to require and achieve the human confession of God as vital to being human. This is the ground for the constant struggle against idolatry."

A second recurrent phrase of the Qur'an which contributes to our understanding is the phrase, "God apart" or "to the exclusion of God." The Arabic words are "*min duni-illahi*." This expression speaks to contemporary Muslims' disillusionment with their own acts which have excluded God. This concept is broad and includes acts ranging from unexamined indifference to militant repudiation of God. It concerns the displacement of God from emotional life and the imagination, in human self-reliance. Muslims today have a growing awareness that many of their efforts to bring meaning to life have been misdirected, that they have invested hope for the future in systems and ideas that are *min duni-illahi*. This new awareness is at the heart of Islamic resurgence.

The call to Islam is thus a call to recognize true lordship. Denial of the lordship of God is the supreme human sin. The third Arabic word under consideration is "*shirk*," the sin of believing that God has co-existents or partners. *Shirk* describes deification of what is not God. In the days of Mohammad, *shirk* described the polytheism of Mecca and its environs, but Muslims today recognize that *shirk* applies to contemporary false gods as well. Science, nation, and affluence are proper in their place but are sometimes deified. Our modern world generates new idolatries more subtle than the old ones. The secularized, modern Muslim loses God in the neon lights of pride and self-sufficiency, in nationalism, and in Westernization. Recognition of the modern forms of *shirk* also gives impetus to the present strengthening of conservative Islam.

For Muslims to confess that God was is not enough; He must also be recognized now as the only true God. This affirmation of the divine—and the corresponding call to proper worship and appropriate religious expression—take the form of a battle among people about their humanity. Witness to this affirmation and call takes corporate and ultimately political form. Muslim nations which are choosing to reverse secularizing trends in their countries and are looking more and more to their Islamic roots for purpose deserve our attention and our attempts to understand. Especially those Christians who encourage others to take religion seriously, who challenge the ultimacy of modern idols, should appreciate the earnestness and integrity of conservative Muslim intentions in this time of resurgence.

# Mennonite World Handbook (a review)

ADOLF ENS and JOHN FRIESEN

**Mennonite World Handbook. A Survey of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Churches.** Edited by Paul N. Kraybill. Lombard, Ill.: Mennonite World Conference, 1978, 390 pp., \$6.25 (pb)

With its tenth assembly in Wichita in 1978, Mennonite World Conference came of age. Fifty-three years after its founding in Switzerland on the four hundredth anniversary of the beginning of Anabaptism, representatives from forty-six countries met together to celebrate their peoplehood. It was by far the most representative meeting of the ten sessions to date. Of particular significance for many was the presence of 443 representatives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. At the first assembly in Basel and Zurich in 1925, the hundred participants represented only five countries.

North American observers were not only impressed with the international quality of the Wichita meeting; they also drew from that experience missionary implications. To one the assembly was "like one big mission conference, and we began to get the feeling of one world."<sup>1</sup> Another saw in it evidence that the strong missionary orientation of Mennonites in the twentieth century had been fruitful. Wichita therefore was "a great incentive for further faithfulness in Mennonite mission efforts."<sup>2</sup>

But if this "heady international flavour was a vivid testimony to the missionary movement of years past,"<sup>3</sup> it was also a call to "open ourselves to the possibility of greater diversity in the expression of our concerns,"<sup>4</sup> and "to think more globally."<sup>5</sup> The newly discovered "cultural pluralism and its consequent diversity and faith and practice" could mean that "it is irrelevant to dream about a unified worldwide Anabaptist communion."<sup>6</sup>

The report of the conference's Findings Committee recognized this new dimension of our Mennonite self-consciousness. "We pray for guidance in understanding as to what it means to be faithful Mennonite people in God's Kingdom now that we have been given this wondrous gift of cultural diversity."<sup>7</sup> After Wichita, what does it mean to be a Mennonite? For one observer that question is by no means rhetorical. "It points to a burning issue for the days ahead."<sup>8</sup>

For the many who could not witness the Wichita assembly in person, the *Mennonite World Handbook* provides a less immediate experience of the scope and diversity of the worldwide Mennonite church. Although compiled explicitly in preparation for the tenth assembly, it serves a much greater purpose in providing readers with a systematic survey of the history and present state of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ communities in over forty countries. The publication of this *Handbook* as well as *International Songbook*<sup>9</sup> reflects the intention of the

General Council of the Mennonite World Conference to foster a greater awareness among its members of the scope and diversity of the Mennonite brotherhood.

Although Mennonite missionary activity in the so-called third world had begun seventy-five years before the first assembly in Zurich in 1925, the "younger churches" did not get onto the agenda of World Conference sessions until its fourth assembly in 1948. The third congress a dozen years earlier had heard reports from the USA, Canada, South America, and several European countries, but only a brief report on "the mission of the Mennonites" to represent Asia and Africa. At the Goshen-Newton meetings in 1948 two representatives from India gave brief testimonies, and missionaries reported for Argentina and Congo. The report of the fifth conference, held in Basel in 1952, devoted forty pages to a report on "Mennoniten in aller Welt," but Africa was omitted entirely and Asia represented by Indonesia only. The assemblies in Kitchener (1962) and Curitiba (1972) provided much more opportunity to hear reports from the various countries, including those of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Apart from these reports of the various Mennonite World Conference proceedings, only a few books are available for the person who wants to obtain an understanding of the Mennonite world brotherhood. Agape Verlag in 1967 published a 128-page bilingual (English and German) well-illustrated booklet, *Mennonites Around the World*, edited by Anni Dyck.<sup>10</sup> In the same year C. J. Dyck's *Introduction to Mennonite History* was published by Herald Press as a high school and college text book.<sup>11</sup> It includes an eighteen-page chapter on Latin America and one of similar length on Africa and Asia. Both are helpful but brief and by now a dozen years out of date. (A decade in the churches of the "developing" world produces far more changes than one notices in the Mennonite churches of Europe and North America.)

The *Mennonite World Handbook* therefore represents a first in providing this kind of comprehensive overview of the Mennonite world community. It is divided into five sections. The three introductory articles of the first section are designed to explain the development of world Mennonitism in its present configuration. C. J. Dyck, editor of the proceedings of the seventh, eighth, and ninth assemblies, summarizes the history of the Mennonite World Conference. Frank H. Epp, a Canadian Mennonite historian, documents the role of immigration of Mennonites through the centuries, allowing readers to see how and why Mennonites of European origin have come to the many countries in which they now reside. Wilbert R. Shenk, secretary of Mennonite Board of Missions overseas missions, describes the mission efforts of the Mennonite churches of Europe and North America, thus providing a helpful background to the history and origin of the younger Mennonite churches which have resulted from mission activity, rather than migration.

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Adolf Ens and John Friesen both teach history and theology at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The second section consists of seven area surveys by continent, including an article about Mennonites in the Soviet Union. These help one to see some of the common features and broad similarities of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in the various regions and thereby to realize a basic unity in spite of the great diversity shown by the individual country reports of section 3. Leo Laurence for Europe and C. J. Dyck for America write the kind of competent report we have come to expect from them. But Takashi Yamada (Asia) and Daniel Schipani (Latin America) provide North American readers with what we hope is but a foretaste of more extensive interpretive historical reports written from a non-Western viewpoint. Many readers will find the essay on Mennonites in the Soviet Union fascinating. This article by Walter Sawatzky represents a valuable contribution since most previous reports about Mennonites in the USSR after the 1920s have been of a piecemeal nature. Foppe Brouwer's report on Australia will come as a surprise to many readers who had not yet become aware that a Mennonite church had emerged on the sixth continent.

The third and longest section of the *Handbook* attempts to present a comprehensive survey of all the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ conferences or groups in the world. It consists of two kinds of reports: one-page statistical tables which include details about membership, organization, officers, official language, number of ordained workers, budget; and brief sketches of the present character of each group or conference. Well over half of these reports, including those for countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, are written by members of the indigenous church although some twenty are still written by missionary or MCC persons. With seventy-five contributors to this section, a good deal of unevenness in the quality of the articles may be expected. That is indeed the case, but the standard never gets below an acceptable minimum and many of the articles are fascinating for their content and delightful in their style. Even the silences speak. Somalia and Vietnam, for example, have virtually empty statistical tables, and China is missing entirely.

A few sections are of special note and may be easily overlooked. At the conclusion of the South and Central American section, Calvin Redekop describes the history, immigrations, and present situation of the Old Colony Mennonites in Latin America who total about 24,000 baptized members. Although these groups have not participated in the Mennonite World Conference to date, it is helpful to have them included in this survey since they represent over half of all the Mennonites in Latin and Central America.

The latter part of the North American survey includes a number of articles about other groups in the Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage which have not participated in the Mennonite World Conference officially: the Hutterites and the various "Old Order" groups (Amish, Mennonite, and River Brethren). Some of these reports appear to be written by outsiders, but are sympathetically done and informative.

The one-page statistical tables include fascinating data. The Muria Christian church of Indonesia, for example, which is not the result of direct missionary activity, has as its cable address SIMONS! Gathering statistics can be frustrating work. The editor must have discovered that.

For example, the column reporting total giving for 1976 quotes figures in U.S. dollars or local currency with no discernable pattern. In addition, it appears likely that a wide range of criteria was used by the reporting churches as to what should be included in "total" giving. Comparisons from group to group should therefore be made with caution.

The membership data show rather convincingly where the numerical church growth in the Mennonite World Conference is most rapid at present. Where European churches show a net decrease and North American groups a modest increase, both the Asian and African churches reflect an increase in membership of just over twenty-five percent during the past five years.

Section 4 provides a summary of the statistical information already presented in the previous section. According to this summary table, Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches had over 600,000 baptized members worldwide in 1977. Just over twenty-eight percent are by now of non-European background.

The concluding appendix consists of a list of addresses of inter-Mennonite agencies, Mennonite mission boards, and regional organizations.

Mennonite World Conference is to be highly commended for preparing an excellent *Handbook*. With the groundwork laid by this first edition, it should be quite possible to make the next one even more complete! It will then begin to be possible for English-speaking persons to follow developments throughout the entire world brotherhood. The next step will be to translate this fund of information into the other languages used in Conference's member churches.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Marie K. Wiens, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, November 2, 1978.

<sup>2</sup>Bernie Wiebe, *The Mennonite*, August 22, 1978.

<sup>3</sup>Wally Kroeker, *The Christian Leader*, August 15, 1978.

<sup>4</sup>Harold Jantz, *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, September 1, 1978.

<sup>5</sup>Katie Funk Wiebe, *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Vic Reimer, *The Mennonite*, September 5, 1978.

<sup>7</sup>Paul N. Kraybill, ed., *The Kingdom of God in a Changing World. Proceedings of the Tenth Assembly, Mennonite World Conference* (Lombard, Ill.: Mennonite World Conference, 1979), p. 198.

<sup>8</sup>John W. Miller, *Mennonite Reporter*, August 7, 1978.

<sup>9</sup>See review by Carol Ann Weaver in *Mission Focus*, September 1979, p. 58.

<sup>10</sup>Anni Dyck, ed., *Mennoniten in aller Welt/Mennonites around the world*. (Basel: Agape Verlag, 1967).

<sup>11</sup>C. J. Dyck, ed., *An Introduction to Mennonite History*. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1967).

Hans-Juergen Goertz, *Die Mennoniten*. Die Kirchen der Welt, Band VIII. (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1971) fulfills the same survey function for German readers with a 13-page chapter on South America and 18 pages on Africa and Asia.

<sup>12</sup>The four-volume *Mennonite Encyclopedia* (and its German counterpart, *Mennonitisches Lexikon*) must be mentioned as the most comprehensive source on Mennonites around the world. But considerable effort is needed to piece together the entire story for most of the individual church communities. For example, the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* has at least 37 articles dealing with the Mennonite mission and church in Indonesia.



# Chronicle

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## Evangelism/Church Growth Resource Team June 21, 1979

### A THEOLOGY OF CHURCH GROWTH

The Home Missions Division of Mennonite Board of Missions and Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries have appointed an Evangelism/Church Growth Resource Team. Members of the team are LeRoy Bechler, Inglewood, California; Eldon King, Dalton, Ohio; David Kniss, Arcadia, Florida; and Richard Showalter, Mechanicsburg, Ohio.

The team assignment includes articulation of a theology of evangelism for a believers church, identifying and developing resources to strengthen church planting and church growth, and serving as resource consultants with conference leadership groups. As decentralized staff persons for the two boards, each team member is available approximately 30 days per year to work at the team assignment.

The following statement was drafted by Richard Showalter, team coordinator, then refined and affirmed as a working stance by the team June 21, 1979. The statement attempts to utilize insights which come from the church growth movement in terms which are compatible with believers church understandings.

The statement is shared here for stimulation and response. The team welcomes further dialogue and invites critical evaluations which strengthen the ministry and witness of the Mennonite Church.

### A THEOLOGY OF CHURCH GROWTH

In 1955 the publication of *The Bridges of God* by Donald McGavran introduced a new orientation to "church growth" in the worldwide missionary community. It began with the question, "How do peoples become Christian?" It has continued with the application of various social

sciences (history, psychology, sociology, anthropology) and their tools to understanding and stimulating church growth, especially in foreign mission programs originating in North America. By 1975 this same orientation to growth was being applied to evangelistic outreach in North America as well as to overseas missions. Since then, church growth has become a popular subject of conversation in Christian churches and evangelistic circles across North America.

The Mennonite Church gave thorough notice to this church growth movement in February 1973 at a meeting of the Mennonite Missionary Study Fellowship at Elkhart, Indiana. Papers presented at that meeting are available in a short book entitled *The Challenge of Church Growth* edited by Wilbert R. Shenk. The purpose of the meeting was to evaluate the church growth movement, not to set forth a Mennonite position.

Since then, increasing numbers of Mennonite pastors and leaders have served as purveyors of church growth insights gained through contact, direct or indirect, with Pasadena teachers such as Donald McGavran, Alan Tippett, Peter Wagner, and Ralph Winter. Church growth teaching has provoked spirited discussion and evaluation among Mennonites, as it has in other ecclesiastical circles.

Apart from evaluation of other perspectives, what do Mennonites believe about church growth? We submit these affirmations:

1. *God's desire is that disciples be made of all peoples. (Matt. 28:19, 20).*

The fulfillment of the Great Commission in any generation is not dependent upon how many foreign missionaries are sent out, but it is a task belonging to the total church. Neither is it dependent alone on how many new churches are planted. Rather, the question is always this: Are disciples being made of all peoples? Are they learning to observe "all things"? If disciples are being made, the heart of God is satisfied.

We believe that congregations grow and new churches emerge as disciples are made. Authentic discipleship and witness are both functions of communities gathered around Jesus.

We also believe that the sending of missionaries to establish new churches is part of the divine rhythm of making disciples. Yet it is always important to ask, who is the missionary? Does the missionary go from a praying, believing community? Is there a clear call of God for apostolic ministry? Is the call affirmed by the community from which the missionary goes? Is the missionary a mature disciple, with proven reliance on God and readiness to disciple others?

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2. *When church growth is kingdom growth, heaven rejoices (2 Pet 3:9; Luke 15:7).*

God's intention is to reconcile all things to himself in Christ (Col 1:13-23). Although the processes of kingdom growth are ultimately a mystery (Mark 4:26-34), we are given the privilege of seeing the ripened harvest, of laboring in that harvest (John 4:34-38), and of rejoicing with heaven in the extension of the kingdom (Phil 1:3-6, 18). True church history is the great story of kingdom growth in human history since Pentecost.

We do not identify church growth with any denominational expansion, though such expansion may be a part of kingdom growth. The Spirit of God is not sectarian; the transcendent biblical reality is the new person in Christ (Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 5:14,15).

3. *The Spirit of God transcends all cultural divisions (Gal 3:26-29).*

Although we are culturally limited, God is not. The gospel of Jesus Christ is neither Middle Eastern nor Western. The forms in which it is preached are shaped by the cultures of its preachers, but the gospel itself is for all people everywhere. Thus, the new person in Christ is introduced into the universal Body of Christ which knows no sociological boundaries. We preach the gospel with confidence everywhere.

4. *Jesus meets people "at home," among their own people in their own cultures (Acts 10:34-36).*

Because God does not limit himself to part of humanity, he does not call people to receive a foreign Christ as Lord. The church grows within each human community by abiding in the living Christ who meets people where they are.

Many people are at home within a monocultural setting with little contact with people of other cultures. Others live in multicultural communities, particularly in cities. Local churches will grow and take shape in relation to the unique experiences and temptations of their members. Each living local cell will be a place where its own competing gods are dethroned, where Jesus comes in power to be Lord.

Growth in discipleship is often greatest where members help each other with their common struggles.

5. *Numerical church growth is a worthy and important goal, though it is not an end in itself (Matt 7:21-23).*

The goal of church growth is essentially the simple Spirit-led desire that nonbelievers come into the joy of salvation, that the lost be reconciled to God. This goal we affirm without qualification.

Sometimes, however, the goal of church growth is tainted with personal or group pride. We become interested in the growth of **our** church, **our** denomination, or **our** doctrinal orientation. Or we think that bigger is better.

We do not believe God honors such a party spirit. Nothing is more important than doing the will of God, not even church growth.

6. *Discipleship and church growth are two sides of the same coin.*

The same Lord who instructed us to teach "all things" told us to go to "all people" (Matt 28:19,20). Discipleship is mere words apart from the love of God which reaches out to others for their eternal salvation. Church growth is irrelevant apart from the power of God displayed in a whole new creation (2 Cor 5:21).

7. *The careful study of how and why churches grow is one important aspect of the church's mission.*

In studying church growth, we observe people, patterns and practices which God has honored. We also observe patterns which lead to unfaithfulness in evangelism and discipleship.

Church growth principles are tools for understanding what we observe. Since it is Christ who builds his church, all church growth principles are of less importance than our fundamental orientation to the will of God in fellowship, prayer, Bible study and dependence on the Holy Spirit for life and guidance. But in this context church growth study and application has an important place.

It is significant that the "scientific" study of church growth, using the tools of sociology, psychology, anthropology, and history, has emerged in pragmatic, technocratic North America. In other cultures, other approaches to the growth of the church are dominant. We make no apology for being North American, or for desiring to place our intellectual tools at God's disposal in the proclamation of the gospel. Neither do we judge other approaches which proclaim Jesus. We stand with the worldwide Christian community in the fellowship of the gospel.

"But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:10b,11).

## In review

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*Passport to Missions.* By W. Guy Henderson. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1979, 180 pp., \$4.95 (pb)

### Reviewed by Ben Doerksen

Too often we consult the manual after we have tried without and failed. Having toured the Orient earlier this year, I personally could have benefited by reading *Passport to Missions* before I traveled. With more and more Christian lay persons visiting mission fields, a book like Henderson's is invaluable.

Henderson has spent 20 years in the Third World and speaks from personal experience and observation. Although the book is written with a Baptist slant ("There are still hundreds of islands in the South Pacific without a Baptist witness" p. 126), and mission policies and statistics deal basically with the Southern Baptist movement, the cross-cultural emphasis is objective and valuable to any prospective traveler.

Chapters one and two provide a biblical basis for missions in a simple layman's language. After that Henderson attempts to view missions through the eyes of the national. He suggests suitable dress and conduct so that the visitor will not become "the religious fly in the Third World ointment, playing havoc among the missionaries and the nationals." If an American tourist feels at home in a Third World church, the national member probably feels like a guest in his own church.

In addition to providing a wealth of information for the prospective traveler, Henderson begins each chapter with a personal experience that gives life and warmth to the book. Although admitting shortcomings in the past, Henderson concludes his book with tremendous optimism for missions in the 1980s.

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*Ben Doerksen is an instructor at Bethany Bible Institute in Hepburn, Saskatchewan. He taught English in Nigeria from 1964-67.*

*Christian Mission to Muslims: The Record.* By L. L. van der Werff. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1977. 366 pp., \$8.95 (pb)

### Reviewed by Roelf Kuitse

This book deals with one part of the long history of Christian-Muslim relations. It focuses on mission work done in India and the Near East by Reformed and Anglican Missions from England, Scotland, and the USA in the period 1800-1938. The last chapter describes the contributions Gairdner and Zwemer have made; the nineteenth century efforts to reach Muslims culminate with these two missionary scholars. In the encounter of Christians and Muslims they are the dominant people at the outset of the twentieth century. The important international missionary conference in Tambaran in 1938 marks the end of the time span this book covers. The first chapter gives a bird's-eye view of the development of the Protestant concept of mission in the period 1500-1800 as a background for the chapters about mission work in India and the Near East.

The writer has restricted himself with regard to time (1800-1938), place (India, Near East) and groups (Reformed, Anglican). Even so he had much material of the most varied kind (the book has 66 pages of notes and bibliography). The book contains important information about the various approaches of the church in mission to Muslims: the apologetic approach of Pfander ("Balance of truth") and others; Henry Martin and his emphasis on personal evangelism; the education work of the Church of Scotland (Duff and others); the service motive in medical missions (Scudder); the importance of the indigenous church in presenting the gospel. In connection with the last approach, van der Werff devotes much attention to the ancient Orthodox churches in the Near East; they have lived for centuries as minority groups in societies ruled by Muslims. The writer describes missions' attempts to relate to these churches and to bring in reformation and renewal. The author regards these churches as the best avenue to reach Muslims. The ancient, Eastern churches are unknown to most Westerners. This fact makes the history and present situation of the chapters dealing with these churches especially important.

The last chapter deals with Gairdner and Zwemer, two people with a sincere faith, a



deep knowledge of Islam, and a great love for Muslims. Both have made important contributions to theological reflection on Islam. Both Gairdner and Zwemer have interesting evaluations of Sufism, Islam's mystical current.

This work is a report, a record of what took place in a certain part of the church which related to its Muslim neighbors. Despite the fact that we face a new situation in the relationship between Christians and Muslims, we can learn a great deal about attitudes and approaches from the experiences of previous generations.

Dr. van der Werff has brought together a wealth of information about one part of the long story of Christian Islamic encounter. The book reflects only the Christian missionary side of the story, but this story is described objectively. Dr. van der Werff leaves open the question of lessons to be learned from this part of mission history; this question must be answered by the reader.

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*Roelf S. Kuitse is director of the Overseas Mission Training Center, Elkhart, Indiana.*

*Don't Go Overseas Until You've Read This Book.* By Neil Gallagher. Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany Fellowship Inc., 1977, 123 pp., \$2.95 (pb)

#### **Reviewed by Vernon R. Wiebe**

I wanted to go overseas, but I didn't want to read this book. I thought it was another in a series of bland "how to's" in foreign service and travel which I had already thumbed through. But I promised to review it, and I was pleasantly surprised.

The surprise came because the author was a Peace Corps veteran who changed from an agnostic into a Christian believer through the "shabby" witness of an unknown (to this day) missionary.

All too often, Christian advice on overseas demeanor is given by persons who have been Christians all their lives, and little new insight is contributed through their advice. Neil Gallagher's book is different.

Neil Gallagher was a Peace Corps teacher and medic in a colony for those suffering from leprosy in northern Thailand where he met a missionary. But after resisting the missionary's invitation to believe, Gallagher became a Christian.

Gallagher went on to win Thailand's Foreign Service Award and Outstanding Young Man of America Award. Gallagher says that the missionary who pointed him to Christ is the one who should have received the awards.

The strength of this book is the combination of the former steely-eyed, idealistic agnostic and the warm-hearted realistic evangelical.

The book does well on advice for identifying with locals and shucking the ugly American image. The book is also a diary of failures and successes with culture shock and a confession of insult and prejudice toward missionaries overseas.

Gallagher gives good advice on "attacking culture shock before it attacks you." Good advice, too, on "how missionaries, and Christians in general, should handle prejudicial people like me," is helpful.

This book is based on personal experiences and experiences of missionaries, teachers, and anthropologists.

Gallagher is a college teacher who has been a high school teacher, college instructor, university administrator, and minister. He has written widely for popular and professional periodicals. The book is a record of deep personal experiences, much reflection, and good writing.

If the book has any failing, it is the tilt toward the missionary, but this is offset by no-nonsense realism that is welcome in missionary circles.

*A Handbook of Principles and Practices of Mission Agencies.* By Arnold W. Pearson. Portland, Ore.: Author, 13750 NE Rose Parkway, 97230, 127 pp., \$7.95 (pb)

#### **Reviewed by Vernon R. Wiebe**

"This handbook," the author says, "was intended to meet a need for concise answers to many questions that many potential missionaries have about mission agencies." A first glance at the body of the book makes one feel that they must have all been answered. Many are.

The book did not appeal to me at first. It looked like a compilation of baseball trivia.

It took some time to get my bearings. More attention to separation of the sections would have avoided the run-together of information. The author is to be complimented for choosing the cheaper type-written approach. It would have been a good investment to rent a typewriter with clean sharp print.

The book was produced for Multnomah School of the Bible students who are potential missionaries. The burden of the book is that evangelical missions are diverse and the missionary candidate is entitled to understand that diversity. The book is designed to go deeper than the promotional literature of the agencies.

The book reports the answers to 159 questions posed to 34 mission societies. There is information on missionary participation in policy making, supervision of missionary work, viewpoints on infant baptism, pressure to send children to MK boarding schools, age and family requirements, policy on divorced persons, adopting children, and salary plans.

The handbook is not intended to be a substitute for personal contact with the mission. It is intended to give a good beginning to information that the missionary candidate needs to begin talking with a mission society.

The strength of the book is in the ten pages of explanatory comments at the beginning of the book. These are actually a summary of the findings. Among them are these: "Note that the majority of agencies were started in the 20th century." "Check to find out if those in authority are answerable to the churches in some way. Appointed officials may tend to be self-perpetuating." "Most faith missions will accept Bible School training. Denominational missions generally like the applicant to have college and seminary as well."

Unfortunately this survey includes only five (out of 34) denominational missions. (The survey included those missions that visit Multnomah). Adding another ten denominational missions would have doubled its usefulness.

Mission administrators will find this compilation useful to check against their policies and practices. Because it contains so much specific material, this book will be outdated in several years.

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*Vernon R. Wiebe is general secretary of Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services, Hillsboro, Kansas.*

*Evangelical Awakenings in Southern Asia, Evangelical Awakenings in Africa, Evangelical Awakenings in East Asia, Evangelical Awakenings in the South Seas, Evangelical Awakenings in Latin America* (5 vols.). By J. Edwin Orr. Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975-78. 1163 pp. total, \$2.95 each (pb)

#### Reviewed by C. Norman Kraus

This is a series on religious awakenings in different parts of the world, and each volume is complete in itself. The series began with *Southern Asia* and *Africa*, both first published in 1970. These were revised and enlarged in 1975, and the volume on *East Asia* was added. Then in 1976 and 1978 the volumes on *The South Seas* and *Latin America* completed the set.

We noted that each volume is complete in itself. In fact, in the first two volumes ten chapters are repeated, and the last three volumes continue to repeat a number of the earlier chapters. This repetition is apparently to demonstrate the historical relatedness of the revivals in England, Wales, Scotland and the United States with those in other parts of the world. The thesis is that there has been a causal chain of reaction around the world beginning at least with the awakening at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

J. Edwin Orr himself participated as a revival preacher in several of the awakenings which he reports. He took his training at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Oxford University, and UCLA. I mention this to point out the significant confluence, if not conflict, of interest in the writing of these present books. Orr obviously tells the story as an insider attempting to document his testimony, and he brings his considerable skills as a historical investigator to bear on his project. One has the constant feeling as he reads that Orr is trying to prove something.

Orr's thesis is that evangelistic expansion is the product of revival or "awakening" and in turn, when it is effective, leads to renewed awakening. The work of missions moves in a fructifying cycle between revival and numerical and geographical expansion. His definition of awakening is typically pietistic and leans toward the charismatic—a sudden work of the Spirit among believers manifest in conviction and confession of sins, and often accompanied by simultaneous audible prayer, laughing and crying, visions, trances, and other such phenomena. These

latter all tend to focus on the sufferings of Christ. The result of such experience is the "realization of forgiveness and cleansing." (See *Southern Asia*, p. 195). He speaks of five such awakenings up to the early 1900s and attempts to trace their impact on the mission fields of the world.

The major direct social effects of such experience are those which follow from renewed individual honesty and compassion. He claims, however, that the consequences were social and political as well as evangelistic, and he attempts to document his claim by pointing to "evangelical politicians" who were influential in changing slavery laws and laws that affected the larger British empire as well as the home front. The problem with this is the definition of "evangelical" in this context and the narrowing of the cause to such individuals. The impact of revivals can be documented on some reform movements, but the record reads otherwise in other cases.

More directly, as reported in these volumes, the group result (social) seems to be a great increase in the number and length of group meetings which reinforce the individual's new commitment.

These books are amazingly full of informational data collected from around the world—names, vignettes, stories, brief explanations. But there is serious lack of an adequate organizational principle. There is a dismaying and confusing amount of disjunction and repetition in the telling of the story. The same names and events turn up in many topical contexts, and this happens in such a fashion that one is not always certain whether the same events and persons are being referred to.

But what is more troubling organizationally and theologically is the lack of a concrete ecclesiology to undergird and give connectedness to the history. The churches in these various countries have their own rhythm of advance and consolidation, evangelism and service, but Orr pays no attention to that. It is almost as though the church does not exist except as a revival which is its essential life. There is no sense of the church as the authentic "community of the King," as Howard Snyder puts it.

Finally, it seems to me that these volumes have a questionable mixture of history writing and apologetics. The use and identity of "evangelicals" which can be numbered on a given continent not only narrows the historical focus, but it strongly implies that efforts of all others are somehow not significant to the mission of

Christ. Orr's mention of men like E. Stanley Jones and Kigawa is peripheral and ambivalent! When the focus of interest is upon only "evangelical awakenings," the complementary gifts of the Spirit to the church for its world mission are ignored if not discounted.

Certainly one does not want to downgrade the personal experience of forgiveness and renewal as a key factor in the evangelical mission of the church, but to identify salvation with one aspect of the church's religious experience and to equate its mission with revival and evangelism gives the author too slender a thread on which to hang his comprehensive history.

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*C. Norman Kraus has taught Religion at Goshen (Indiana) College since 1951 and has written several books, including the recently published The Authentic Witness.*

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*Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents.* Edited by Marlin L. Nelson. South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1976. 294 pp., \$6.94 (pb)

#### Reviewed by Verney Unruh

For more than a century missionaries, primarily from North America and Europe, have carried the gospel to the "ends of the earth." The primary goal was to win people to Christ and plant indigenous churches, characterized as self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. Most of the emphasis was placed on the first two, with self-propagation receiving only marginal emphasis. When it did receive attention it was mostly in relation to new believers witnessing to their own neighbors and countrymen.

Though most missionaries probably believed that the Great Commission applies to all believers in all countries in all ages, in reality they worked on the assumption that the new churches were too poor or inexperienced for "foreign missions"; consequently, that was the responsibility of white missionaries. That assumption has been challenged and is

being corrected as the so-called "younger churches" from the Third World are awakening to the responsibility they have in carrying out the Great Commission. A recent survey (Wong: *Missions from the Third World*, 1973) uncovered over 200 agencies in Asia, Africa, and Latin American supporting over 3,000 missionaries.

Materials and data on these developments are limited. For that reason the book under review is a welcome contribution. Edited by a man who spent 20 years in Korea, it brings together 31 articles and studies relating to missionary activity of the churches planted by Western missionaries. An appendix lists "The Top Ten Books for Third World Missions Reading, an additional 300 articles on the subject, and a "Directory of Asian Mission Societies."

The book arranges the documents into five categories: Earlier Writings on Third World; Missions from the Third World; The All-Asia Mission Consultation Seoul '73 and Results; Third World Missions at Lausanne; and Missiological Implications of Third World Missions. The Conclusion calls for "A New Partnership in Mission" and ends with "An Open Letter to Directors of Asian Mission Societies."

The great diversity of materials makes this a difficult book to evaluate. Following are this reviewer's observations.

The work reflects the "Church Growth" point of view. Six of the chapters are by faculty of the School of World Missions at Pasadena, and an additional nine chapters are by graduates or former students. Of the "Top Ten Books" in the appendix, eight are by faculty or students of SWM.

The book is clearly Asian-centered. Of the 12 contributions by Third World leaders, 11 are Asian, one is African; no contributions are by Latin Americans. The All-Asian Missions Consultation Seoul '73 is given an entire section. Perhaps the title should have been "Readings in Asian Missions."

The focus of the writings is primarily on evangelism and church planting, in a narrow sense. Questions of how the gospel speaks to oppression, injustice, the economic disparity in the world, and related issues are not considered.

Little reference is made to the thinking or activities of those representing the former International Missionary Council or the World Council of Churches. The few references to these organizations are generally negative.

The problems the younger churches face as they take up the task of overseas missions are similar to those faced by the old missions from the West—recruitment, orientation and supervision of personnel, strategy for carrying out the objectives and structures. Considerable attention is given to structures that will enable the younger churches to carry out their task. They should avoid the mistakes of the past made by Western missionaries. Yet the Westerners are proposing what kinds of structures Third World Missions should develop. What do Third World leaders envision?

Considerable repetition in the book could have been eliminated by more careful editing. The Seoul '73 Consultation especially receives repeated emphasis which does not particularly add to its significance.

*Readings in Third World Missions* deserves reading, not because it has all the answers or covers the subject adequately, but because it has gathered into one volume some of the significant writings on the subject, and thus brings to the attention of the churches in the West an exciting new development.

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*Verney Unruh is a missionary in Taiwan with the General Conference Mennonite Church.*

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*Good News to the Poor: The Challenge of the Poor in the History of the Church.* By Julio de Santa Ana. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis books, 1979, 120 pp., \$4.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by John W. Miller**

This volume purports to be a survey of the "challenge of the poor in the history of the church" (from Old Testament times to the Middle Ages). It is interesting not only for that reason, but because it affords insight into current thinking on this subject among the upper echelons of the World Council of Churches. According to the cover, its author is a Uruguayan theologian/philosopher/sociologist who works as studies coordinator in the WCC department for development. Since the book is small (109 pages, plus an 11-page appendix outlining

the present thinking of the WCC on the "Struggle of the Poor and Oppressed"), Santa Ana had to be selective and sketchy. The danger arises that the author's viewpoint, derived from other sources, may impose itself on the historical materials, rather than the materials provoking an authentic dialogue.

This, in my opinion, is what has happened. As the appendix reveals, the author and the Commission he works for have a definite point of view toward the "Struggle of the Poor." The plight of the poor and "certain trends in the affluent societies" are so serious, the Commission feels, that "they need to be tackled with apocalyptic urgency." The only right response for rich Christians is to divest themselves of their wealth, break off their identification with the oppressor classes, and join the poor in their struggle for justice. (Even to the point of violent revolution? Santa Ana seems to be saying "yes.") The Bible (including Jesus) calls for something like this, Santa Ana argues. There poverty is portrayed, not as a virtue, nor as an unsolvable problem, but as an evil which must be eradicated by action of the poor themselves. The early Christians believed this as well, according to Santa Ana, but following Constantine the church began to compromise. The wealthy were taken in as members without being challenged to divest themselves of their wealth. As a consequence the church ceased trying to eradicate poverty and opted instead for institutions designed more to alleviate suffering than to destroy its causes. Only here and there (among the Waldensians and Franciscans) do we see the older program of identification with the poor for the sake of reversing oppressive structures.

This is the first in a projected series of books on this subject "to facilitate a process of ecumenical reflection. . . ." The second and third volumes will bring the story of the challenge of the poor in the history of the church down to the present. However, if these subsequent books follow in the steps of this one, they might be characterized more as "apologies" than histories. Their purpose would appear to be to justify current WCC policy of support for revolutionary movements among the poor and oppressed in Third World countries.

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*Readings in Missionary Anthropology II.* Edited by William A. Smalley. South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1978, 944 pp., \$9.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Paul G. Hiebert**

The essays in this collection of *Readings* first appeared in the journal, *Practical Anthropology*. Smalley's first *Readings* collection was issued in 1967. The present, much expanded edition has deleted about a third of the earlier articles and added many new ones to make available to students and missionaries a balanced selection of essays covering a wide range of topics in mission anthropology.

The post World War II era of missions has been characterized by a growing awareness of the important contributions anthropology can make to the cross-cultural ministries of the church. The first area of mutual interest to be explored was that of linguistics. This arose from the missionaries' interest in learning local languages in order to preach and translate the Scriptures.

More recently came the realization that social, political, and economic structures influence conversion and the growth of the church. Pioneering work in this area was carried out by members of the American Bible Society translations team, including Eugene Nida, William Smalley, William Reyburn, William Wonderly, and others interested in missionary anthropology. Their forum was *Practical Anthropology*, a small but seminal journal published from 1953 to 1973 that aired many of the key issues dealing with the application of anthropology to missions. Many of these articles are of importance to missions not only for their historical value, but because they are classical statements of structural-functional and linguistic applications to the international church scene.

For the most part the articles reflect the application of structural-functional approaches to missions. These range all the way from the role of the missionary to culture change, family and group organization, and societal structures. Some articles based on communication theory are also included, although this topic is treated more extensively by Nida in his earlier books. Of interest to the reader is the expanded section dealing with religion, world view, and myths. These fields, along with symbolism and cognitive deep structures, have emerged as important fields in anthropology only in the last decade. While

the articles in the reader do not reflect recent developments in these fields, they do serve as valuable introductions to topics such as contextualization, the nature of religious ritual and symbolism, and new structuralist approaches to myths that arise out of cognitive approaches to anthropology.

Although, as is the nature of a *Reader*, the book does not present a single coherent theory of mission anthropology, it does provide the reader with a range of topics and approaches which is difficult to duplicate elsewhere in missionary literature. It is a must for those concerned with the application of anthropological thought to contemporary missions.

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8., *Tulpengasse: A Church Blossoms in Vienna*. By Margaret Epp. Winnipeg, Man.: The Christian Press, 1978, xii, 276 pp., Canada \$3.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Peter J. Ediger**

In a day when much is written and said about church planting and church growth, it is refreshing to read 8., *Tulpengasse: A Church Blossoms in Vienna*. Tulpengasse is the street on which a group of persons gather for "Gemeinde," that experience of being together in the body of Christ. Margaret Epp tells the story of this Gemeinde in Vienna, Austria.

The foreword is appropriately written by the children of Abe and Irene Loewen Neufeld. The book evidences what they write in the foreword:

*One of the things that has most profoundly affected us is the humanness of our parents' ministry. Certainly the profound recognition of the need for God's presence and guidance has always been there. But being "called" or "set apart" has never been allowed to put them "apart" as different from those to whom they minister. The conviction of being God's servants has never stood in contradiction with being normal persons*

*with a whole range of feelings, emotions, successes, and failures.*

It is this strong and beautiful coming together of the human and the divine in the lives of Abe and Irene and in the life of the Tulpengasse Gemeinde which most profoundly characterizes the story of their lives and the life of the congregation.

*Tulpengasse* tells many "before" and "after" stories. It tells the stories of persons coming from many and varied experiences, ranging from no church interest or involvement to deep but frustrated church involvements, who enter into the healing, caring experience of the congregation in Vienna. It tells the stories of how their life and work, their marriages and relationships are changed by their involvement in this fellowship.

Bible study and personal sharing are strong emphases in the development of the church at Tulpengasse. Shared decision-making is another one. *We have never taken a vote in our church*, Abe Neufeld says, *We talk together until we agree, or agree to disagree for the present and pick the matter up again later. We have never yet asked for a show of hands, but we talk and pray and stay together until we agree on the issue.*

Neither has Tulpengasse Gemeinde flourished from large financial contributions coming from North America. While there has been considerable support from the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and personal friends of the Neufelds, from the beginning the Neufelds have emphasized that the primary resources for being a church and building a church need to come from the people with whom they work. At one point, when an interested friend visiting from North America wished to make a large donation for an expanded program, the church accepted the donation only with some hesitation and deposited the money until such a time that it was clear that a program was needed and that the Lord was giving direction for the program.

Canadian author Epp, who visited the Tulpengasse Church in preparing for the writing of the book, is obviously selective in telling the story. The heavy emphasis on personal, biographical material becomes somewhat repetitious and at times sentimental. It is not clear whether the relative absence of any serious discussion of Tulpengasse mission in a particular socio-economic-political setting is a reflection of the congregation's priorities or the

author's. Whichever, it is a serious omission.

*Tulpengasse* is a witness: a witness to the hunger of people in a particular place for experiencing the love of God in the context of a community of believers; a witness to the dedication and love of a particular couple; a witness above all to the power of the Holy Spirit to use persons to form new expressions of Gemeinde.

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*Mission: A Practical Approach to Church Sponsored Mission Work.* By Daniel C. Hardin. South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1978. 264 pp., \$4.95 (pb)

**Reviewed by Robert L. Ramseyer**

*Mission: A Practical Approach to Church Sponsored Mission Work* is an attempt to provide a manual for Churches of Christ congregations in North America who sponsor and supervise mission work outside the North American setting. Since the Churches of Christ do not believe in any organization beyond the congregational level, the elders of individual congregations must assume the supervisor and counselor functions which mission boards and their executives assume in most other churches.

Hardin believes that with the use of appropriate measuring instruments in the selection of missionary candidates and fields of service, it is possible to match the personality of a missionary with a mission assignment so that many of the causes of missionary frustration and failure can be avoided. His chapters devoted to the personality type of the missionary, the cultural setting in which the mission is to be carried out, the development level of the mission field, and the way in which the

missionary is to be supervised and controlled, form the core of the book. Almost half of the book is devoted to helps for determining the cultural adjustment which may be called for on the part of the missionary.

Unfortunately Hardin does not seem to understand the depth of the relationship between the gospel and its cultural setting. He defines the indigenous church as "a church in which God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, in contact with people of a particular cultural setting, give rise to a Christian body that is outwardly and uniquely molded by that culture over a fixed framework of fundamental scriptural doctrine" (p. 184). His understanding of core doctrine and outer cultural framework is an interpretation which has so often separated doctrine from Christian living, making doctrine supracultural and unchangeable while Christian living is subject to cultural modification. It then becomes natural for people to feel that right belief is more important than right living.

Although Hardin discusses identification at great length, I was left with the uneasy feeling that for him identification is a means to an end and that "practical" in the title means pragmatic and utilitarian. I missed the love for people as people which compels us to share God's love with them. I missed an emphasis on working with and listening to people in the mission setting because the gospel constrains us to do this, rather than because this is the best way to persuade people to become Christians.

Hardin's treatment of other Christian groups seems cavalier, to say the least. He lists Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Lutherans together as "Old Line Episcopal Churches" (p. 100), and Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mennonites together as "'Commune' Type Churches" (p. 101). He is generally careless with details which are not central to his message. For example, he places the tombs of Marx and Engels in Moscow (p. 117).

Although Hardin expresses some useful ideas in this book, particularly in his scaling of the things which often cause adjustment problems for missionaries, this will not be an important book for most MISSION FOCUS readers.

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# Editorial

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The two articles plus the review article in this issue provide us with a two-dimensional study of missionary experience. The story of the church in Burma and the analysis of the current Islamic resurgence bring us into touch with political and religious realities which are shaping the world of the future.

The review of the *Mennonite World Handbook* points out ways in which participation in mission since 1851 has gradually but firmly altered the character of the Mennonite/Brethren in Christ family of churches. Other churches could give similar reports. The point is that mission contains the seeds of change which move in many directions.

One of the discomforts of the Burmese Christian experience—and this can be documented from many other countries as well—is the way Western Christianity continues to affect their church life. During the past decade while those who have been associated with the traditional missionary movement have been trying to work toward more positive mission-church relationships, a new Western sending base—without historical ties to churches in Asia, Africa, or Latin America—has emerged.

Stephen Board has described the burgeoning parachurch movement in which he discerns “The Great Evangelical Power Shift” (*Eternity*, June 1979). He reports that some 6,500 parachurch organizations in the United States present themselves as merely “arms of the church,” but in which the church has had no say. Critics score these agencies for their lack of accountability to anyone but themselves. In Board’s words, these “groups are religion gone free enterprise.” He cites the concerns pastors register about this movement. Gordon MacDonald, from the Bosten area, observes: “More and more the evangelical movement is run by the parachurch rather than the church. But theologically and methodologically the great secret of whole person ministry is the congregation.” MacDonald questions the measurable effectiveness of many of these organizations. The American Institute of Church Growth made precisely this point about the “Here’s Life America” campaign. They found results to be negligible and graded the effort a failure. But this finding did not deter Campus Crusade from mounting a similar, worldwide campaign.

What Board observes from within the evangelical world, Martin E. Marty documents as a fundamental characteristic of American religion. Surveying the past decade, Marty sees the emergence of **laic religion** as the

most important fact on the religious scene (*Context*, October 15, 1979). Laic religion rests on a “privatizing” of religious commitment, together with a clustering of individuals based on **consumer** preference. The widespread erosion of confidence in public institutions in the 60s and 70s encouraged people to turn to private solutions. The breakdown of trust in church and synagogue created a fertile field for the religious entrepreneur. “The characteristic leader is now the celebrity.”

Laic religion, in contrast to churchly religion, answers to no one. The celebrity leader is typically a master of the electronic media and marketing techniques. But the celebrity leader is in part a product of underlying social forces. Although celebrity leaders have helped shape the current religious scene in America, they are also a product of underlying cultural values. Laic religion “goes shopping until it finds the product it wants and the god it can control.” Our culture has schooled the people to expect to get what they want.

Marty discerns laic religion to lack theological depth and social bonding. It tends to emerge around a single issue or cause. He credits laic religion with having shaken some traditional churches and synagogues out of their lethargy, but it is at root a worldly movement which encourages people to believe that religious faith guarantees personal gain. It focuses on the individual and self-gratification; it lacks a vision of responsibility for and commitment to the *oikoumene*, the household of God. The traditional church may not have the dashing glamor of the celebrity set, but it has provided a context from which members had to face the claims of the body on the individual member.

Observers of the religious scene foresee no early change in this trend. The churches cannot afford, however, to ignore the situation. Laic religion challenges the churches to ask whether they are allowing themselves to be coopted by laic religion as a way of accommodating to the threat. Have they been preaching a message faithful to the gospel or a diluted word which paved the way for the emergence of laic religion? One thing is clear: Laic religion is widely represented within the traditional churches even though they can in no way control its influences.

This coalition of laic piety and parachurch organization presents itself as the new sending base. Christians in the non-Western world experience it as a new Western assault on their culture and their dignity.

—Wilbert R. Shenk